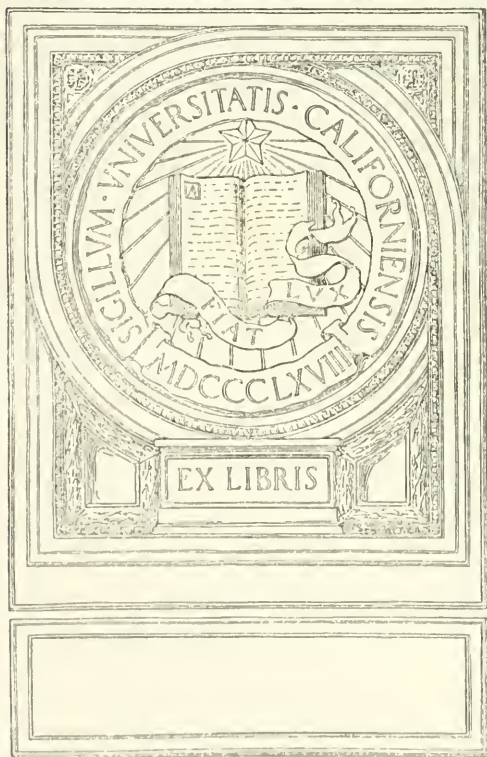


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THE CONVICT.

VOL. III.

1897-1898

THE CONVICT:

A Tale.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

"THE SMUGGLER," "DARNLEY," "RICHELIEU,"

ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE CONVICT.

CHAPTER I.

THOUGHT, we are told by some authors, is the high and characteristic privilege of man. The truth of the axiom is not universally admitted, and even if it were so, I can only say that, like many other high and characteristic privileges, thought may become very burdensome, if its exercise is constantly enforced. I cannot help believing that the Arabian fabulist, when he represented Sinbad the sailor cast upon a desert island, and persecuted by an old man, who, once having got upon his shoulders,

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could never be thrown off again till he was made drunk, intended to allegorize the fate of one condemned to solitary thought, and, perhaps, to point out the only means he saw of obtaining deliverance from its oppressive dominion.

Left once more alone, Dudley could not refrain from thinking over, and comparing the words and actions of the two men who had been his only visitors in that solitary place, and he certainly felt none of that regret that the last of the two had left him, which he had experienced on the departure of the first. The very fact, however, of their having come at all was at first a source of some apprehension to him. He had sought out a place of refuge where he thought the foot of man had never trod, nor ever was likely to tread—at least for many long years; and now, within one week, two strangers, either of whom might betray the secret of where he sojourned, had found him, and conversed with him. How many more

might be led thither, by accident or curiosity, or in the pursuit of gain, or from any of the many motives which lead man to wander and explore? It was a question which startled him, and, as I have said, he felt apprehension and regret at first; but those sensations gradually wore away, as day after day, and hour after hour gave him more and more up to the weariness of thought. To provide for the wants of the day or of the future, to complete his shelter from storm and tempest, to frame from the rock, or from the clay, or from the trunk of the cedar, or the oak, the tools and utensils of which he had need, did not afford sufficient occupation to engross his mind entirely throughout any one day. When he was fishing in the lake, when he was watching for the passing of game, when he was hewing out cisterns from the rock, or breaking with his axe the hard crust of the salt pool, thought would still press heavily upon him, and daily it became more heavy and dark. To hear the

tones of the sweet human voice, to tell the feelings, or give utterance to the fancies of his own breast, seemed each moment a privilege more to be coveted, and he felt bitterly that man is made for society, and that utter solitude is utter desolation.

A month passed after he had met with Brady, without his seeing one single human being—without his ever hearing the tones of even his own voice; and the effect upon his mind may be understood when I say, that at length, before kneeling down to pray, he murmured, “I will say my prayers aloud, for fear I lose the use of speech.”

But even that was not a relief; and darker and darker grew his meditations as the leaves became a little brown, and the grass assumed a yellow tinge, and the flowers gave place everywhere to the berries in the wood, and the sun rose later, and set earlier; till at length he could bear it no longer, and he said, “I will go out and seek this Norries; for I believe if I remain

longer here, given up altogether to the bitter contemplation of the past and the future, my brain will turn, and I shall go mad."

With his gun upon his shoulder, then, his powder-horn, his shot-belt, and a large wallet of skin, containing his provision of biscuit, by his side, he set out early in the morning, directing his course according to the information he had received from the bushranger. The air was fresh and cool, and here and there a faint star might still be seen in the sky, "paling its ineffectual fires" at the approach of the sun. For three hours he walked on lightly and with ease ; but then the heat began to have effect, and before another hour was over, the sun beat fiercely on his head, so that he was glad to sit down beneath the shade of a tall, solitary tree, where the wind from the ocean, whose roar he heard not far off, could come to refresh him. He felt how terrible it must be to cross, in the summer season, any of those wide, arid deserts which form a considerable portion of New Holland,

and one of which he knew lay close to the east of the fertile tract in which he had fixed his dwelling. There, for seventy or eighty miles, extend limestone hills without grass, or tree, or water; not a herb, not a shrub, not a living thing, if it be not the lizard or the scorpion, is to be seen throughout the whole tract; and as he looked to the south-east, and saw a yellow, reddish streak extending across the distance, and resting with a hard edge upon the sky at the horizon, he thought, "I must take care not to involve myself in such a wilderness as that. To die of thirst must be a fearful death;" and instinctively he rose, and walked on towards a spot in the plain, where the grass seemed somewhat greener, and the trees in more luxuriant foliage than the rest.

He found, as he expected, a little stream, somewhat shrunk, indeed, by the late heats, but still containing plenty of clear and beautiful water; and wading through some reeds upon the bank under a fringe of large trees, he was going

to fill a gourd which he had dried, when suddenly a number of birds, of the duck species, rose up close to him, and putting his gun to his shoulder, he fired, and brought down two with one shot. They were beautiful birds, of a jetty black colour, and seemed fat and well-conditioned; and he laid them down on the bank, and then went in again to fill his gourd. When he came back, he found a large snake, with its head raised, and its tongue darting in and out, hissing at the dead birds, as if hardly comprehending how they lay so still. The reptile did not seem to hear his approach, and he killed it easily with the stock of his gun, saying somewhat bitterly, "Slaughter, slaughter! It is all warfare, this life, defensive against the strong, offensive against the weak. It is a strange state of being."

Almost at the same moment, a loud shout met his ear, and he charged his gun again hastily, suspecting that the cry might come from some of the wild natives. He listened atten-

tively, and shortly after heard a sound amongst the bushes farther up the stream. But he had often been told that such is the stealthy skill of the savage, that in creeping upon his face, he does not disturb the foliage more than a light wind, and here it was evident that the person who approached was taking no pains to conceal his advance, dashing through the brush-wood with a hasty step, and seeming rather to court than avoid observation.

“Can it be some one in pursuit of me?” thought Dudley; but the next moment, a voice shouted aloud in English, “Who was that firing?” and after pausing a moment, the figure of Mr. Norries, with a gun in his hand, and two dogs following him, came forth from the bushes, and stood to gaze under one of the large detached trees. His eyes instantly fell upon Dudley, but that gentleman’s appearance was so much altered, that Norries did not recognise him at first, and cocking his gun, advanced cautiously, with his broad brow

furrowed with a doubtful and inquiring frown. He himself was well dressed after the colonial fashion, in a large straw hat, light linen shooting-jacket, and cotton trousers; and certainly Dudley's appearance was somewhat strange and Robinson Crusoe like, the greater part of his dress being composed of the skin of the kangaroo, and the cap upon his head, though formed of lighter materials, being of his own manufacture from the inner bark of some of the trees which he had cut down. The next instant, however, Norries seemed suddenly to recognise him, and placing his gun under his arm again, came straight across the stream to meet him.

“Ah! Mr. Dudley! I am glad I have met you,” he said. “I intended to come and find you out as soon as the weather was a little cooler; for that infernal villain, Brady, told me there was an Englishman who knew me, living on Mount Gambier, and I was sure it was you, from his description.”

“I told him to tell you,” answered Dudley;

“though I did not choose to give him my name—not that I believe he would betray me or any one, for there is, I think, some good in the man; and I am much obliged to him for having remembered my message.”

“Betray you, he certainly would not,” answered Norries; “for that was not one of his vices; and he punished it bitterly enough when he found it in others. You heard what he did after he left me?”

“I have heard nothing since I saw him,” answered Dudley. “But you speak as if the man were dead.”

“Oh! he is hanged by this time,” answered Norries. “The day after he quitted my house, he stole a horse at Pringle sheep-run, and then rode straight on night and day, I believe, to take revenge upon a man as bad or worse than himself, who kept what they call a store. The fellow’s name was McSweeny; and it seems he had given this man Brady up to justice. He was sitting quietly in his cabin, drink-

ing with an old man and a lad, about nine o'clock at night, when Brady presented himself at the door. Few words passed between them, for Brady's salutation was only 'McSweeny, I want you.' He had a pistol cocked in his hand, but McSweeny walked out doggedly, and asked, 'What do you want, Brady?'—'I give you five minutes to say your prayers,' replied the ruffian.—'I don't want five, nor one,' answered McSweeny. 'I'm not given to prayers; and as I've lived, I'll die.'—There were no more words passed, but a shot was fired; and when they ran out from the house, they found McSweeny, with his brains blown out, and lying before his own door. The whole country was in arms after the murderer, and the last news I heard was, that he had been caught and sent to Hobart Town, where he has been hanged ere this time, as he both desired and deserved. But let us dismiss such a person from our thoughts, Mr. Dudley. In intellectual being, as in mere animal existence,

there are various classes and dignities, according as he is ranged in which, we value the individual. Who minds seeing a serpent swallow a lizard, or a chameleon suck in a gnat? The existences which perish are so small, as not to be worth the counting; and this man's being was even less, for all that was not contemptible, was noxious. I gave him food when he wanted it, and shelter. The utmost extent to which his gratitude carried him was not to rob me when he went away. Let us talk of other things. You will, doubtless, soon return to your own country. I never shall."

The whole of his companion's manner, tone, and language surprised Dudley not a little. There was an elevation in it, a sense of dignity which he might have concluded would have been totally extinguished by a criminal conviction; but Dudley had not read the character of Norries quite aright. There are men, and he was one of them, who, taking to their heart some great principle, religious, moral, or poli-

tical, have their reward, their encouragement, and their consolation in following its dictates, and seeking by any means to attain the objects which it sets before them. They build a pyramid of thought, and its vastness sinks every other thing into vain insignificance. I have already shown the principles which Norries had adopted, and the objects that he sought; and let it not be supposed that because sometimes he did seek those objects by means that his own heart condemned, he had any motives of personal ambition, any dreams of individual greatness in the future to gratify. With a mistake, not at all uncommon in politics as well as in religion, he fancied that the end not only justified the means, but dignified it. Nay, more; he felt proud of every sacrifice which he made for the one great principle. The sacrifice of wealth, of station, of profession, of friendship, of prejudices or opinions, of liberty, ay, of life itself, were all in his eyes honourable, if incurred in the pursuit of his grand object. To

be branded as a felon, to be sent forth from his native country as a convict, ay, to work as a slave, had it been required as a consequence of his assertion of his wild notions of liberty, would have only added to his personal dignity in his own eyes, and to the dignity of the cause for which he suffered.

Dudley had never met with a political fanatic before ; and though he soon learned to comprehend his companion's feelings, it at first struck him as somewhat surprising to find his manner prouder, and his tone more elevated as a convict in a distant land, than they had appeared when free in his own country. In answer to his last words, however—words which puzzled him as much as the manner in which they were spoken, he replied, “There is no probability, Mr. Norries, of my ever returning to my own land. Perhaps you are unaware, that for an offence in which I had no share, I was condemned to transportation for life. Indignant and disgusted, indeed, by the scene to which I was

transferred, the cruel tyranny on one part, and the wickedness and vice on the other, I contrived to escape, and made my way hither, concealed on board a whaler, and I must therefore request you to mention to no one that you have seen me. I find, indeed, that of all punishments one of the most terrible is solitude; and I was on my way to visit you, even for a day's relief, when I met you here.— But there is no chance whatsoever of my even attempting to revisit England.”

Norries smiled. “*Magna est veritas, et prevalebit,*” he replied. “You are innocent, and you will be proved innocent. I was guilty, as far as bad laws can make men guilty who strive against oppression. I denied not the splendid crime they imputed to me, and here I stand, glorying in it. Here I will remain, too, for ever, seeing new nations rise up around me, and trying to give such a direction to their energies while yet in infancy, that in their manhood they shall root out the very name of

oppression from their land, and every man be free, and virtuous in his freedom. I thought it no shame, indeed, as the patriarch Joseph by his wisdom won favour with those to whom he was sold in bondage, to render myself useful to my taskmasters, and thus to get my hand withdrawn from the bonds I could not break; but with England I have done for ever. Twice have I struggled for her freedom, twice have those who should have supported me fled at the first note of danger. I will see what a new race will do. But as you are so far on your way to my dwelling, Mr. Dudley, either come on with me, or I will go back with you.—But no; it were better you should come on, for I have much to talk to you about, and something to give you.—Do you not remember I promised you some papers? They are lodged in safe hands, and you shall have them yet. The two most important I have with me here.”

“How did you contrive to preserve them?”

asked Dudley. "Me they stripped of everything."

"There were ways and means," replied Norries. "Sometimes in the sole of my shoe, sometimes in the lining of my coat, they were concealed, but at all events they are safe, and shall be yours. The others are left at Clive's house, and will be given to you on your return."

"Do not, do not, Mr. Norries," replied Dudley, "try to nourish hopes in me which may—nay, which must—be disappointed. All that could be done to save me from disgrace and infliction was done at my trial. Every evidence that could be brought forward was adduced in my favour, and nothing that poor Edgar Adelon could do was left undone. My counsel, too, were the first in the land, and I am bound to admit, as one educated in the study of the law, that setting aside all consideration of my character and sentiments, of which neither judge nor jury could know much, there was sufficient to convict me."

“And yet you were innocent,” answered Norries; “that should show you, Mr. Dudley, what sort of things laws are. Edgar Adelon did all that he could, indeed; and I helped him to the best of my power, though I was unable to move from the wounds I had received. But all that good, kind youth’s efforts were in vain, and would have been fruitless even if he had succeeded in finding the men he sought. I spoke with them afterwards, and neither of them ever saw you on that fatal night, so that they could prove nothing. All his labour served but two ends—to bring me hither,—for it was through his inquiries for me that others were led to the place of my retreat; and secondly, to open his own eyes to the true character of the viper who has poisoned your existence—he thinks, for ever.”

“Whom do you mean?” asked Dudley, eagerly; “I know no one who failed to do anything that was possible to serve me. Sir Arthur

Adelon, it is true, was absent for a strange length of time ; but still, all that he did—probably all that he could do—was kind and generous. Do you mean him ?”

“ No !” answered Norries, somewhat sternly, “ I do not. He was bound in chains of fear ; and in the end he would have risked something perhaps ; but it was then too late. No ; I mean the man who contrived the whole accusation, who gave it probability, who removed the proofs of innocence, who quietly, and calmly, and deliberately, drew toils around you from which you could not escape, and then left the dogs of the law to worry you at their pleasure.”

“ This is very strange !” exclaimed Dudley ; “ I have had no suspicion of such practices. Do you mean to say I have been made the victim of a conspiracy ?”

“ No,” replied Norries, “ for a conspiracy implies many acting for an end of which they are conscious. Here there was but one, guiding

others who were unconscious of the end for which he strove. Sir Arthur Adelon, himself, was but one of the tools."

"Can you mean Filmer?" asked Dudley.

"Ay, even so," answered Norries; "but come on to my house, and I will tell you all about it; for not being taken till the assizes were over, I was long in prison, and there I learned many facts which, skilfully put together, developed the whole scheme."

"Had we not better rest here till the heat of the day is passed?" asked Dudley. "We have fresh water here; and I have a few biseuits. We can get fish out of the river, too, and broil them speedily."

Norries smiled. "How soon," he said, "man habituates himself to circumstances. What would you have said to such fare two years ago, Mr. Dudley? Hard biseuit, coarse bream, and cold water! But I can treat you better, and can show you a road which, sheltered by tall trees, never feels the sun except for

about half a mile, and which, open to the sea, catches every breeze that blows. There is a little lake, too, on the way, and I have got a canoe upon the lake, in which we can skim easily across, saving many miles of toil. Let us bring these birds with us ; they will add to our evening meal, for their flesh is as good as their plumage is beautiful ;” and taking up the ducks by the feet, he walked on up the stream, with Dudley following, buried in meditation upon all he had lately heard.

CHAPTER II.

THERE was a ball at the Government House at Hobart Town, and although, perhaps, had any one possessed the wishing carpet of the Eastern Prince, and sailed, in the twinkling of an eye, from Paris or St. James's, to the shores of Van Dieman's Land, they might have seen in the assembly, dresses which were at least twelve months behind the fashion, and hair dressed after an exploded mode, yet it was, nevertheless, a very gay and interesting sight, and people seemed to be enjoying themselves as much as if the saloons had been those of a

king's palace, and everybody present had been lords and ladies. A great deal of taste had been shown in the decorations; the company comprised the *élite* of the inhabitants; and although, as is usual in a colony—I might almost say invariable—the government officers and the government officers' wives were not without envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness towards each other, yet the carping and censorious spirit which would have full indulgence a few hours after, was restrained for the time, and nothing could be more civil and courteous than Mrs. So-and-so was to Mrs. So-and-so, or the Attorney General to the Colonial Treasurer.

There was a great number of young and very pretty women present, looking like the fairest blossoms amongst the wilderness of flowering shrubs with which the rooms were decorated; but it might be observed that many of the youngest and the prettiest turned their eyes from to time to one spot in the room more

frequently than they did to any other. That spot, it is true, was not very far distant from the position assumed by the Governor himself; but yet it is probable it was not at the Governor they were looking, for he was a grave, elderly gentleman, of no great attractions, and about two yards from him there stood a young gentleman of much more captivating appearance. He seemed to be hardly one-and-twenty years of age, slight in form, but very handsome in features, with the light hair waving in beautiful glossy curls round his brow, and a good deal of whisker also strongly curled upon his cheeks. He was dressed in the height of the English fashion at the time; and certainly no person on all the earth, not even a Parisian lady, is dressed so well and with such good taste as a high-bred English gentleman. The plain black coat fitting to perfection, but light and perfectly easy, the snowy white waistcoat, the shirt, of extraordinary fineness, as pure as driven

snow, the plain wristband turned back over the cuff, the beautifully-made gloves and boots, and withal that air of ease and grace which, if not a part of the dress, except metaphorically, gives value to the whole, at once distinguished that young man from all the rest, and pointed him out as one of the marked in the capital of nations. There was also something in the expression of his countenance, as well as in his general air, which was calculated to attract attention. There was a quick, bright, remarking glance of his eye, as it fixed upon the door by which visitors entered, that might speak a keen and intelligent spirit, if not some eager and anxious object at the moment; and the slight bend between the eye-brows on the fair broad brow, as well as the firm setting together of the teeth and beautifully chiselled lips, seemed to imply to the one or two physiognomists in the room, a character of rapid decision and determined perseverance. Had it

not been for that expression, with features so fine, and a skin so fair and delicate, the face would have been almost too feminine.

To this young stranger,—for he was quite new to the colony,—the Governor from time to time introduced some of the most distinguished of his guests; and he spoke to them gravely, but courteously, with a sort of flashing and fanciful wit, which seemed so natural and easy to him as not even to produce a smile on his own lip at that which called a laugh from others. In fact, it was but the expression of the thoughts which whatever was said to him aroused, done without effort and without object.

At length another gentleman entered the room, dressed much in the same style as himself, and bearing with him the same air of gentlemanly ease. He advanced straight to the Governor, shook hands with him as an old friend, and was then turning away,—for it seemed, from some after conversation, that they had had a long conference in the morning,

—but the representative of the crown stopped the new comer, saying, “Captain M——, I must introduce you to a young friend who arrived in the Cambria yesterday. He is travelling for pleasure and information, he tells me; and though the amount to be derived here is, I believe, not very great, and this is somewhat a strange place to seek it in, yet I am anxious that any we can afford should be given to him, and I know none so able to give it as yourself. Mr. Adelon, allow me to introduce my friend Captain M——, whose objects in visiting this and the neighbouring colonies are somewhat like to your own, only he has the advantage of having been some months before you.”

Edgar Adelon held out his hand to his new acquaintance, saying, “I have had the pleasure of hearing much of you, Captain M——. Some of the gentlemen whom we took up at the Cape, and especially the surgeon, were well acquainted with your labours of benevolence. I

trust you will grant me the pleasure of your acquaintance."

Captain M—— had been gazing at him with a look of much interest, but perhaps a little too attentively to be quite courteous. He replied, however, "Anything I can do to serve or to assist you I shall be most happy to perform. I have heard of your family, I imagine. You are Mr. Adelon, of Brandon, I believe?"

"My father has lived at Brandon for some years," replied Edgar, "but it belongs to my cousin, to whom he is guardian. Our own place is Overbridge, in Yorkshire."

"Is your father at Brandon now?" inquired Captain M——.

"No," replied Edgar; "he is a great way off. My cousin's health required change of air, and he has been wandering with her far and wide. The last letter I had from them was dated Jerusalem."

"Then I suppose you did not accompany

them?" said the Governor; "yet I should have thought, Mr. Adelon, much more, both of pleasure and information, might have been derived from such a tour as that which they took, than from a long, dull voyage to Van Dieman's Land."

"Some people prefer soda-water, some champagne," answered Edgar, with a smile. "Business to me of deep interest kept me in England at the period of their departure; some accidental circumstances pointed my inclination this way, and in three days after I had formed my resolution I was upon the water. The voyage was dull enough, I will admit; but I hope, sir, that I have now cracked the nut and come to the kernel."

"I think that your father's name is Edgar," said Captain M——, returning to his questions, not without an object—"Mr. Edgar Adelon, if I mistake not?"

"No," replied the young gentleman, "that is my misfortune and his fault. His name is

Sir Arthur Adelon, but he had me christened Edgar, I am sorry to say."

"I do not see why you should be sorry," rejoined the Governor; "it is a good and well-sounding name enough."

"There are some people, my dear Sir George," answered Edgar, "who are deeply read in history, and who naturally confound me with Edgar Atheling, giving me an historical value which I do not yet possess. It is true the worthy gentleman they take me for has been dead hard upon a thousand years; but people's wits now move by railroad as well as their bodies, and they have not time to stop for such trifles as that. A thousand years are nothing to them; and a lady the other day entered with me at large into that part of my family history, evidently thinking that if I was not actually the man himself, he must at least have been my uncle. I very humbly begged pardon for correcting her, but assured her that the relationship was not near so close as she

thought. She said it was all the same so there was a relationship, and upon that score I referred her to my father, who believes it, though I do not."

At that moment there came another call upon the Governor's attention, and Captain M—— and Edgar were left standing alone together. "I am afraid, Mr. Adelon," said the former, "you have thought my questions very impertinent, but I had a motive."

"All men have, I believe," answered Edgar; "and it is as likely, Captain M——, that you have thought my answers impertinent likewise. But I, too, had a motive, which, perhaps, when we know each other better, I may trouble you with. I have been somewhat vexed, too, and disappointed, since I came here, and do not altogether wish the Governor, though an excellent man, I believe, to see into my feelings or my views."

"Disappointed already!" said Captain M——; "that is very soon."

“True,” answered Edgar; “but still it is so. Disappointed, not baffled, for my motive in coming was too strong to suffer me easily to give up the pursuit of my object. You see I am frank with you.”

“And I will be frank with you, Mr. Adelon,” said Captain M——, in a low voice. “The fact is, I have a letter for you, and I wished to be certain that you were the person to whom it is addressed.”

“For me !” exclaimed Edgar, eagerly. “Who is it from ?”

“I must give you a strange answer,” replied Captain M——. “It is from The nameless fisherman by the nameless lake.”

“That is no information,” replied Edgar. “Have you got it here ?—Could we not go into another room ?”

“I have it here in Hobart Town,” replied Captain M——; “but I certainly did not bring it to the Government House with me. You must have a little patience, my dear sir. I

will bring the letter to you to-morrow ; and to tell you the truth, having found you so unexpectedly, I must take a little time to consider of my own conduct, for there are circumstances connected with that letter which may be difficult to deal with."

"Of course, if the letter is addressed to me, it must be given to me," replied Edgar, almost sharply.

"Undoubtedly," answered Captain M—— ; "but, perhaps, I may not feel myself justified in affording you any farther information than the letter itself contains."

"I dare say that will be sufficient," answered Edgar, with a better satisfied air ; "but, at all events, Captain M——, I think, if that letter be what I suspect, I can show you reasons for giving me every information in your power, sufficient to satisfy fully a man of your character."

"We shall see," answered Captain M—— ; "and in the meantime, as I have said, I will

think over the circumstances. At what hour shall I call upon you to-morrow?"

"At any hour you like," answered Edgar. "The sooner the better, indeed. Will you say six in the morning?"

"Rather early," replied Captain M——; "but so be it. They are going to begin dancing, I see. Is that one of your amusements?"

"Not to-night," answered Edgar; and then after a pause, he added, in a low, meditative tone, "The nameless fisherman of the nameless lake! Was he a tall, exceedingly handsome man—a gentleman in every word, and look, and movement, with the most scrupulous taste in his dress?"

He was interrupted by a smile, faint, and almost sad, which came upon Captain M——'s lip. "He is certainly tall," replied the young officer, "and evidently highly educated. Doubtless he has been very handsome, too, but when I saw him, he was exceedingly

emaciated, pale, and hollow-eyed; and as for his dress, it was not as neat and precise as you mention. It was partly the dress of a convict, partly that of a savage, and his beard was of a month's growth at least."

"I had forgotten," said Edgar, vehemently, putting his hand before his eyes—"I had forgotten how he has been trampled on, and injured, and oppressed, and what changes such injury and oppression may work, even in the innocent, the generous, and the noble."

The suddenness of his gesture, and the warmth with which he spoke, called several eyes upon him; and the next instant he turned sharply away, and entered a lesser room on the governor's left. Captain M—— followed him, beginning to understand and appreciate his character. As but few people had yet arrived, the room was vacant, and sitting down at a card-table together, they entered into a long and earnest conversation, carried on in

low tones, for nearly an hour; and then, some other persons entering, they returned to the ball-room with faces apparently more cheerful than when they had left it.

CHAPTER III.

THE least perceptible gleam of grey light was shining in the eastern sky; the stars were twinkling clear and large, with hardly diminished brightness, when, from the door of a house, in the midst of wild woods and beautiful savannahs, came forth two men, and took their way across a patch of half-cultivated land before the door. The dwelling itself was an odd-looking construction, but not altogether unpleasant to the eye. The principal building was a long range on the ground floor, constructed of masses of very white stone, neatly

hewn and joined together, while above, what seemed a single room, with two windows unglazed, towered above the rest, with a flat roof. All the way along the front ran a little balcony, supported by rough trunks of trees, and decorated with the wild vine; while, along the edges of the walks, which had been carefully laid out through the cultivated patch I have spoken of, were little trellises of lath and twig, partially covered with an immense variety of climbing plants. The whole had an air of comfort, and neatness, and security, as it were, which spread, like an emanation of the social spirit, into the scene around, and took from it that appearance of desolation which Dudley felt so much in his own wilder, though more beautiful, habitation.

For about five miles, Norries walked on by the side of his guest of the preceding night; and then they came to the edge of a low melancholy lake, in the midst of the thickest part of the scrub, as the low woods are called, in

which the dark blue hues of a heavy dawning sky were reflected, varied with lines of light, as the rising sun caught upon the edges of the dull clouds. Three large snowy white birds were hovering over the surface of the gloomy waters; and through a brake in the woods beyond, a dull orange hue marked the horizon where the day was appearing.

The canoe was found where they had left it on the preceding evening; and as they got into the frail bark, Norries remarked, "It will save you fifteen miles of heavy march, for the tarn is very narrow here; but on foot you would have to take the whole way round, which makes the distance well nigh sixty miles, to the foot of Mount Gambier from my house. I have never been there myself, but so the scoundrel Brady told me."

"Not so far, I think," replied Dudley; "but I trust, Mr. Norries, you will come up to my lonely dwelling ere long; for sad and desolate as a residence there was before, it will be even

more so now. My own fate was a dark shadow, but I still had confidence in human nature. I thought it capable of crimes, undoubtedly, committed under strong temptation or sudden passions; but the black page in man's character which you have opened to me, has made me feel sadder than ever. It is another confidence gone, Mr. Norries, and that is always painful."

"We grow grave as we grow old," answered Norries, paddling his canoe with no mean skill, "because we lose the delusions which fill youth with smiles; but do we not grow wiser too, sir? Nevertheless, do not let the discovery of some things in the world, which you did not know, induce you to judge too harshly because you had before judged too leniently. It is in the just appreciation of men and things that lies the wisdom, which gives no merriment but much tranquillity. I have learned some hard lessons lately, Mr. Dudley, as well as yourself; but they have not made me misan-

thropical. I have found that there are worse men in the world, feebler men in the world—deeper crime, and deeper folly, than I thought; but, at the same time, I have found devotion more high and pure, honesty more incorruptible, and wisdom, in simplicity, more beautiful than even my enthusiasm had ever figured. It is as wrong to undervalue as to overvalue men, to hope too little from them as to expect too much; but, for you, brighter days undoubtedly will come, and with them hopes and enthusiasms, which revive, like flowers refreshed by dew, as soon as the sun of success arises. I am too old for such things, but I hope I have found peace.”

“I trust that it may be so in your case,” replied Dudley; “but I will indulge no hopes in my own. They have branded me with the name of felon; can they ever wipe out that stain? They have severed ties which can hardly be knit again. Even now, I know not the extent of the evil; and from my experience of life, I

am inclined to believe that human hope, even in despair, so much outstrips probability, that when ills of any kind are to be suffered and endured, they are sure to be much greater than foresight reckoned upon."

"It is a heavy view of life, indeed," answered Norries; "but yet I hope you will find yourself mistaken. No one can tell, however; and as I have been deluded myself by others, I will take no share in deluding."

At this point, the conversation dropped for the time, and was not resumed again till they were nearing that shore of the lake which was next to Mount Gambier. There Norries left his guest upon the bank, adding a few more cautions and instructions in regard to the productions, climate, and inhabitants of New Holland; and wishing him heartily good bye, turned his canoe, and rowed, or rather paddled, towards the other side of the lake.

Dudley walked on, with his gun under his arm, while the glorious light of the rising sun

spread broad over the whole scene. The morning air was fresh, and he felt invigorated by repose and society; but still his mind was sadly depressed, and his eyes were more frequently bent upon the ground than raised to the woody scene around him, or to the glorious sky above. At length, however, about four hours before noon, he paused for a moment in the midst of a wide savannah, surrounded on every side by magnificent trees, to gaze at the park-like appearance of the landscape, which had reminded him strongly, as had been the case with Brady, of some of the most beautiful parts of his native land. The memories that it called up were sweet, but a well of bitterness sprang up in the past, turning the whole cup of life to gall.

As he looked around, with a slow and contemplative gaze, he fancied he saw a dim, shadowy figure, creeping quietly along amongst the tall bolls of the trees on the edge of the wide meadow. If his eyes did not deceive him, it was the form of a tall man, stealing through the

second or third row of cedars, which were there very thick ; but though he watched intently, he could not catch another glance of it, and he could only guess that it was one of the natives, who, on seeing a white man, had plunged into the deeper parts of the scrub, or had hidden himself behind some tree or bush. He knew that the aborigines were fierce and cunning, especially the Milmendura, who were said to frequent that neighbourhood ; but he was well armed, and did not feel much apprehension, for he had heard that the greater part of the tribe were down at the Coorong, a great salt inlet of the sea, many miles distant, or at the lakes in the same neighbourhood. With one or two, he thought, if he should meet them, he could cope easily, at least on open ground ; and he consequently walked on without any appearance of suspicion, though he kept his eyes upon the scrub, as if looking for game. The cedars were succeeded by a large patch of tall stringy-bark trees, having no brushwood

beneath them ; and there he twice more caught a sight of the dim figure, flitting along, almost step by step, as he advanced, and then sheltering itself behind one of the large trunks. He had now no doubt that it was that of a man watching him, which certainly was not altogether pleasant, especially as the dark colour of the native's skin so much resembled, in the shade, the objects amongst which he was moving, that it was with very great difficulty he was distinguished at all.

When Dudley arrived at the spot where the savannah ended, he chose a passage through a more open part of the belt of woodland which separated it from a still larger extent of grazing ground, and kept a keen watch upon his right, that he might not be attacked unprepared. He saw nothing, and heard nothing, however, for five or six hundred yards, till he was just issuing forth again into the meadows beyond, and had his eye upon the top of Mount Gambier, seen over the wavy outline of

the scrub ; but then a cry was heard, more like the sudden yelp of a dog when hurt, than any sound produced by a human throat, and something came whizzing through the trees towards him. The natural impulse was to jump aside at once ; but before he could do it, a long and apparently heavy spear descended within two yards of him, burying its sharp point deep in the ground, and quivering as it stood nearly erect, like a young tree newly planted.

Dudley instantly cocked both barrels of his gun, and looked towards the spot whence the missile came. But nothing was to be seen except the trunks of the trees, with here and there a little patch of underwood. No moving thing was within sight, but the branches gently agitated by the fresh morning air. Pulling the spear out of the ground, the wanderer carried it away with him as well as his gun, and walking quickly on, got as fast as possible into the open ground again, which now lay before him, unbroken for an extent of nearly three miles.

A wood of tall trees was prolonged upon his right; and on his left was a piece of uneven bushy land, between the meadow and a sterile tract stretching to the sea-shore; but between the two covers, the space of open meadow ground, with nothing but a solitary tree starting up here and there, varied in breadth from a mile to a mile and a half, so that, by keeping a middle course, he was out of reach of spear or arrow sent from beneath the trees. He walked on, then, quietly looking around him, indeed, from time to time, but displaying no sign of fear or haste; and more than once he thought he caught sight of a native in the wood, who did not venture to come out into the open meadow.

By the time he had walked to within five or six hundred yards of the end of the savannah, the sun had gained great power, and the length of the shadows had diminished considerably. Before him lay some miles of country, neither exactly wood nor exactly pasture, but undulating, and broken with a number of scattered

trees, and large clumps of mimosas and cedars, together with thickets of various kinds of shrubs, and juniper bushes, rising to an unusual height. That there was one enemy at least near, Dudley had already proof sufficient; and the tract through which he had to pass before he could reach his mountain dwelling-place was undoubtedly well fitted for the attack of a subtle assailant. There were a thousand places, as he well knew—for he was now entering a country which he had frequently explored—whence a concealed enemy might hurl one of the tremendous spears of the country, without exposing himself, even in the least degree. After short consideration, Dudley resolved to seek a resting-place at a little rising knoll in the savannah, shaded by two or three mimosas, and at the distance of fully three hundred yards from the wood, hoping that, if the savage who had been watching him were alone, he would get tired of waiting for an opportunity, and leave him to pursue his

journey without farther molestation. He seated himself, then, laying down his gun and the spear beside him, but not removing the axe from his belt, as it was there readier to his hand; and, taking out some provisions from his wallet, he began his frugal meal, still keeping a wary eye upon the country round. He had just finished the portion of food which he allowed himself, and had drunk half the water contained in his gourd, when he thought he perceived a curious undulatory movement in the long dry grass, at no great distance. The wind had fallen away, so that it could not be produced by that cause; and he felt sure that a snake, let its size be what it might, would have crept on its way without such evident signs of its progress. Turning his eye a little to the left, he saw the long grass agitated in a similar manner; and starting up at once, he cocked his gun again, and pointed it at one of the spots where the motion was apparent. The act of rising gave him a better view; and

he now distinctly saw several dark objects moving towards him, whenever the grass was thrown aside a little as they advanced. He hesitated an instant, unwilling to sacrifice human life; but knowing that his own must depend upon decision—for both the spear which had been hurled at him, and the insidious method of approach now adopted, showed that, if they were men who were creeping up, they must be enemies—he took his resolution, and, aiming well, fired at the object which had first caught his eye.

In an instant, with a wild yell, rose up six or seven tall and frightful savages, with long curly hair, bedaubed with grease and ochre. One, the moment he had reached his feet, fell back again amidst the grass; but the others, poising their spears lightly for an instant, discharged them all at once at Dudley with an aim fearfully accurate. The exceedingly brief pause they had made, however, to direct their missiles, gave him time enough to jump behind the

nearest mimosa. Three spears passed on one side, one on the other, and two struck the tree, and tore off a large portion of the bark. The wanderer had but short time for consideration ; for after having cast their spears, the savages rushed on with clubs, and other weapons of their own construction, shouting and screaming wildly. Snatching up the spear, of which he had possessed himself, Dudley set his back against the tree, aiming the second barrel of his gun at a tall, powerful man, who was the foremost, and seemed to be the commander of the party. His situation was desperate, indeed, but he determined to sell his life dearly. His gun made him certain of one of the enemy ; and he calculated that, what between the spear he held and his hatchet, he might bring down two more ; but three still uninjured would remain, even when this was accomplished ; and, unable to throw the javelin with their force and precision, as soon as his gun was discharged, each savage had an advantage over

him, which must in the end overpower resistance. The leader of the natives, however, seeing the barrel of the fowling-piece directed towards himself, and probably fully aware of its fatal effects, both from what he had seen that day, and previous knowledge, halted suddenly, and then spoke a few words to his companions in their own tongue. The effect was instantaneous; the men separated at once, and running round the clump of trees, with the second spear, which each carried, poised in their hands, prepared once more to attack from a distance, and from every quarter, so that some one weapon was sure to take effect.

Seeing that he must die, Dudley, still aiming at the chief, was dropping his finger on the trigger, when, to his surprise, the man fell back upon the ground with a loud shriek; and Dudley might have been tempted to imagine that it was a feint to prevent him from firing, had he not at the same instant heard the sharp report of a gun, succeeded instantly by another, while,

at the same moment, a second of the savages sprang high up into the air, dropping his lance with a fearful yell. A loud cheer from the side of the low bushes followed instantly ; and the assailants, finding themselves assailed by arms and numbers superior to their own, fled as fast as they could go, one of them throwing his spear in haste at Dudley before he went, but only grazing his shoulder slightly, in consequence of a hurried and ill-directed aim.

Thanking God for his preservation, Dudley turned towards the spot from whence the cheer he had heard proceeded, and beheld a party of five or six men advancing from the scrub. One was on foot, but all the rest were mounted ; and Dudley, to his surprise, recognised in the pedestrian the vigorous form of Norries, whom he had thought full twenty miles away. The young wanderer advanced at once from under the mimosas to meet his deliverers ; but as he came nearer, the aspect of one of the horsemen seemed fami-

liar to his sight. Associations sweet and happy rose up, which he had not suffered to visit him for years. Hopes undefined and vague, but bright and glorious, swam before his eyes, and with a beating heart and giddy brain, Dudley stopped, unable to take another step in advance.

CHAPTER IV.

AT the same moment that Dudley, with his whole thoughts and feelings cast into confusion, halted suddenly in his advance, the horseman who was coming forward on the right hand of Norries drew his rein tight, and sprang to the ground. A few words passed between him and his companion, accompanied by quick and eager gesticulations, and then he darted forward and clasped Dudley's hand in his own.

“Dudley!” “Edgar!” were the only words that were uttered by either for several moments, for overpowering emotion in the bosom of each

forbade all farther utterance. The coming up of Norries was a relief to both, although there were several strangers in the party who accompanied him, and in one of them Dudley thought he recognised an officer of the government whom he had seen at Hobart Town.

“Did I not tell you, Mr. Dudley,” said Norries, in his abrupt way, “that, notwithstanding all the wickedness and the crime which this world contains, all the folly, the feebleness, and the selfishness which are to be found in every class of life, there is still devotion more high and pure, honesty more incorruptible, and wisdom more beautiful, than even the enthusiasm of inexperience can picture to the mind of youth?”

“You did, indeed,” answered Dudley, with a bewildered look; “but I do not comprehend all this. In Heaven’s name, Edgar, how came you hither?—What brought you to this place?”

“To see you, Dudley,” answered Edgar,

wringing his hand again ; “ to bring you good tidings, to comfort, to——”

“ Well, well,” cried Norries, interrupting him, “ we will talk that all over by and bye. Don’t you see that Mr. Dudley is a good deal discomposed by all this ? He is very glad to meet with an old friend from England, and that is enough to shake a man’s heart who has not known what gladness is for many a long month. Besides, he has had to defend his life against a whole herd of these savages. My gun served you well there, Mr. Dudley, and two of the balls you gave me last night for my own defence have been turned to yours. But let us come up to the scene of action, and see what the results are. I brought two of the men down, I think.”

“ And I one,” answered Dudley ; “ but one of them was only wounded, and I believe got away with the rest. Those spears of theirs are frightful things ; and I had five or six of them thrown

at me at once. The tree sheltered me that time, but I could not have escaped them again in the same manner, and must have died here, had it not been for what I must call your marvellous arrival at the very moment when my fate was in the balance."

"It was not marvellous at all," answered Norries. "The fact is, as soon as I had got to the other side of the lake, after leaving you this morning, I found Mr. Adelon and these other gentlemen coming down from my house, where they had been to seek me for information and guidance; and paddling back again, while they rode round, we followed very close upon your heels. We saw some of the natives moving about, and suspected that they were watching ourselves, which only made us hurry our pace, and follow the track under the low scrub between the pasture and the shore. Hearing these black dogs yelping, and the report of a gun, we were quite sure that some European was in trouble, and so we scrambled

through the bushes as fast as we could go, and got in sight of our friends with the spears just at the right moment. You must have walked very slow, or halted somewhere, for you had a full hour's start of us."

"I did walk slow," answered Dudley, "and I also sat down to rest under the trees, in hopes that the savages, having no cover to hide them, and being afraid, I believe, of a gun, would free me from their unpleasant company, and leave me to pursue my way during the evening in peace. But it seems they need very little cover, for without a bush or shrub of any kind to hide them, they had got within a hundred yards of me, before I was aware of their approach."

"Lord bless you, sir," cried the government officer, who was following slowly as they advanced towards the mimosa trees, "they will creep through the long grass just like a rattlesnake. But here lies one of them, dead enough, I think." And with that he dismounted, and

turned over the body of one of the savages with his foot. The man had apparently died instantly and without pain, for Norries' ball had passed through his heart, and the features, though horrible in themselves, were not contorted. Another was found a moment after, with the same low, unpleasant brow running back at a sharp angle from the eyes, and after gazing at it for a moment, Dudley turned, inquiringly, to Norries, saying, "What shall we do with the bodies?"

"Oh, leave them where they are," answered Norries. "Their friends will come and fetch them, and some day or another, you may see them slung up between two bushes, like a scarecrow in a field in England.—But now, Mr. Dudley, I think these gentlemen and I had better go on to your place, for this, I believe, is the only opportunity I shall ever have of returning your visit."

"I shall be very happy to do all I can for their convenience," answered Dudley, looking

at the numerous party with some hesitation ;
“but I think you could give them better accommodation, Mr. Norries, for I have nowhere to lodge myself but a hole in a rock.”

“I can hardly take them there,” whispered Norries. “I have often poor creatures who have run away coming about me, and you see there are some of the government people here.”

“Oh, never mind the accommodation, sir,” exclaimed the government officer, speaking at the same time. “We are all bushmen, except Mr. Adelon and his servant, and we can make a bivouac of it, if you can lodge those two.”

“That I think I can do,” answered Dudley, “though very roughly. You do not know, Edgar,” he continued, turning to his young friend, “what it is to lead a rover’s life here.”

“It is a life I should like beyond all things, for a short time at least,” replied Edgar Adelon ; but the officer added almost at the same time, addressing Dudley, with a meaning smile, “You

have had a good three months' trial of it, sir, at all events."

Dudley hardly knew what to understand from his manner, for there was a shrewd, intelligent look about the man's countenance whenever he addressed him, which plainly indicated that he knew all about his actual situation as an escaped convict, or deserter, as it is frequently called in colonial parlance; but, at the same time, his manner was respectful, and not in the least degree menacing, so that Dudley could not suppose for one moment, either from his general demeanour or from the company in which he came thither, that his object was to apprehend and convey him back to a penal settlement. Yet what was he to think? What was he to expect? He did not venture to indulge in hopes, for the Bright Promise-maker had so frequently deceived him, that he trusted her no longer; and even the first whisper of her voice, sweet and soothing as it ever is, he shrunk from, as if it had been the fanning of a

vampire's wing lulling him into a fatal repose. Hope was, indeed, the enemy whom he dreaded most, for he feared that that sweet voice of hers might prove more treacherous than man's bitterest hate. Neither could he understand how his fate could have been changed; but while he said to himself, "No, I will not indulge in hope," he trusted still.

Giving his horse to the servant who followed him, Edgar Adelon walked on by Dudley's side, sometimes conversing with him, and sometimes in silence. They looked at each other frequently, with an anxious glance, as if each had much to say to the other—questions to ask, tales to tell, intelligence to communicate; but there were so many always round them, that it would have been difficult to say one word unheard, and the common feelings and thoughts of mutual interests in the breasts of both were not fitted for indifferent ears. They had proceeded some ten or twelve miles in this manner, and Dudley thought he per-

ceived that Edgar walked with a fainter pace, when they arrived upon the bank of a broad but not very deep river, a tributary, apparently, of the Murray, or the Glenelg. Dudley had crossed it on the preceding day, and knew that in no place it was more than knee-deep. He was about to walk in at once, therefore, but Edgar knelt down upon the bank to drink, saying, "I am dreadfully thirsty, and hungry too, if the truth must be told, for we expected to find provisions at your house, Mr. Norries, but were disappointed by not finding you within."

"You should have gone in and taken them, young gentleman," replied Norries; "we never scruple at such things in the scrub. Every man is welcome to whatever the house contains in the way of food. I dare say, however, Mr. Dudley has a biscuit or two in his wallet. You look faint."

"He has not touched a morsel all day," said

the officer. "He was so eager to get forward, we could not make him eat."

"I have only three hard biscuits left," answered Dudley; "but stay, I have the means of getting more nourishing food. I saw fish in this river as I passed yesterday, and they must be at feed about this time. If you will light a fire, I will soon get some." And drawing out a winder with a strong line, he sought along the bank for bait. A peculiar kind of grub appeared in plenty near the roots of the trees, and while Edgar lay down upon the bank to rest himself, Dudley cut a sapling for a rod, and once more tried his fortune for a meal out of the waters. The first cast of his line was unsuccessful, and suffering the bait to float slowly down, the fisherman was preparing to draw it out a second time, when he suddenly felt a tug which nearly drew the rod he had made out of his hands. The officer and one of the other men had followed him, watching

his sport; and although, by every device he could think of, Dudley strove to save his line from snapping, and draw the fish to the shore, it soon became apparent that without a reel or any appropriate tackle he must be unsuccessful; and the officer, plunging in, exclaimed, "I will kill him!" and ran his left hand down the line, opening a large clasp-knife with the other. He had to rue the experiment, however, for the moment after having bent down and dipped his arms in the water, he drew them out again, exclaiming, "He has cut me to the bone!"—but he resolutely attempted the feat again, and appeared to succeed, for shutting up his knife, and taking hold of the line, he drew it slowly to the side, when, with Dudley's assistance, he lifted out an enormous fish of the perch kind, weighing not less than fifty pounds.* A fire was by this time lighted; and

* These fish in the Murrumbidgee and other rivers sometimes reach the weight of a hundred or a hundred and twenty pounds. They are evidently genuine perch, although the colonists call them river cod.

the fish, cut into slices, was put to broil thereon, affording, in a few minutes, a very satisfactory meal to the whole party.

When somewhat refreshed, Edgar Adelon looked up, saying with a smile, "I feel stronger now, Dudley. Thanks to the nameless fisherman of the nameless lake." And in those few words, a part, at least, of the history of Edgar's coming was told to his companion. After resting for about an hour and a half, the whole party rose, and pursued their way towards the foot of Mount Gambier, which began to tower above them as they advanced; and when, having left some of the party below with the horses, the others reached the top, the same wild and magnificent scene was presented to the eyes of Edgar Adelon, in the light of the setting sun, which had welcomed Dudley on the day of his first arrival. The effect was great upon an enthusiastic and impressible mind, and he exclaimed, "Well, Dudley, methinks it would

not be so hard to pass one's days in such a spot as this."

"This is not its only aspect," answered Dudley, laying his hand upon his arm.

"And it is so with everything in life," said Norries. "There is scarcely any object in any state so inherently beautiful, or so inherently hideous, that the light in which we view them will not render them either pleasant or repulsive to the eye."

"There is somewhat more to be said, too, Edgar," continued Dudley. "Much of the intensity of everything depends upon its accessories. There are accessories to all states, in the human heart. Think, for one moment, of the condition of my mind here, and you will see that a paradise might well be a desert to me."

"True, true," answered Edgar, pressing his hand upon his eyes, and then adding, with a sigh; "but that is over."

"Take my advice, Mr. Adelon," said Norries. "Go into the hut, lie down, and give yourself

up to sleep, without thinking or talking any more. From what I have seen of you to-day, I very clearly perceive that you have been too much fatigued, and too much excited. In ten minutes it will be night, and you will rise refreshed, to tell your tale under the light of the dawning day. I will sleep out here upon this soft grass."

"I do not think I can sleep," replied Edgar.

"Try, try," said Dudley; and he led him into his wild dwelling, and pointed out to him his own lowly bed of dried herbs and grass, covered with the skins of the kangaroo. "There, Edgar," he said, "rest there. It has been my couch through many a weary and restless night; but sleep should visit your eyes more readily, for kindness surely has its own balm, and he who comes to comfort and to cheer may well expect repose and peace."

He was turning to leave the hut, but Edgar detained him for a moment, saying, "Let me comfort and cheer, then, Dudley, by telling you

my best news first. You need no longer be an exile, you need no longer live in solitude ; I have your full pardon with me. You are free."

It was not that Dudley was ungrateful either to God or man. It was not that he did not feel the intelligence as a relief ; but at that moment the sense of having been injured was stronger upon him than ever. The redress did not seem to him to be complete, and he repeated, " Pardoned ! pardoned !—What have I done that requires pardon ?"

" Nothing, Dudley," answered Edgar ; " but there is much to be told, and much to be considered. Not now, however, for I feel that Mr. Norries's advice is right, and I must have repose."

CHAPTER V.

THERE is a strange and curious difference between the light of morning and the light of evening. The same sun gives it, the same flood of glory falls through the skies, the same scene lies below, the same horizon sweeps around. It seems only that the lightgiver is at the one hour in the east, at the other in the west, and no sufficient cause appears for that extraordinary difference of hue in the air and over the earth.

It was morning, and the soft early light was stealing gently over everything, amongst the

leaves of the trees, through the breaks in the rocks, down into the deep basin of the hills, into the red caverns of the lava, along the smooth unruffled surface of the lake ; and Charles Dudley and Edgar Adelon were seated together upon the top of the bold crags which towered over the crater of the extinct volcano. The whole scene was softened to their eyes ; a slight mist hung over the woody world on the one hand ; and profound shadows, only broken here and there by the quiet morning ray, lay in the deep abyss upon the other side. It was a fit scene for such conversation as they were to hold, and Dudley, with his head resting on his hands, listened with eager attention to his young companion's words, sometimes, indeed, interrupting him by a question, but generally too intensely moved for any inquiry.

“ Then she loves me still,” he said,—“ then she loves me still !”

“ As deeply and devotedly as ever,” answered

Edgar, "and you have wronged her if you have doubted, Dudley."

"Never, never!" murmured Dudley.

"But let me proceed," said Edgar Adelon. "Matters pursued this course for many months. I recovered completely from the fever. The trials of the rioters at Barhampton took place, and almost every man who underwent the ordeal was condemned. Men thought the government very lenient in not pressing a more serious crime upon them, and banishment for life was judged a mild sentence. I heard nothing of Mr. Clive or Helen, and you can imagine, Dudley, how my too eager and impatient spirit could bear such suspense. I inquired of Filmer. I asked everybody connected with the farm, but I received no intelligence. The priest assured me that he was acting on Mr. Clive's behalf without any other authority or directions than those which he had received on that fatal night which brought so much misery

along with it. Yet Helen had promised to write, and I never knew her break her word. My father, though long detained in London, returned at length to Brandon."

"It was after the trial of the rioters," he added, with a sad but meaning look; "and finding poor Eda in the melancholy and desponding state which I have described, he took her into Yorkshire, in order, if possible, to divert her mind from the subject on which her thoughts rested so painfully. It was clear, however, to my eyes, at least, that he himself was neither well nor happy. I guessed the cause; but that is a part of the story, Dudley, which I cannot enter into. You may, perhaps, divine the whole, but I cannot speak of it. I took advantage of the change of our residence from Brandon, and obtained my father's consent to travel for some months on the continent. He had no idea, it is true, why I went, or what I sought; but a suspicion had crossed my mind, which, as it proved, was a just one. What

made it enter into my head I cannot rightly tell. There are some things so like intuition, that I can hardly doubt that the mind has greater powers than philosophers have been inclined to admit. In this instance a perception of the truth flashed across me like a stream of lightning one day while I was conversing with Filmer. He said nothing, it is true, which could naturally give rise to the idea which presented itself. The words were merely, 'Poor Clive's long absence,' and whether it was the tone in which he spoke, or the peculiar look with which the words were accompanied, I know not; but I asked myself at once, 'Is Clive's absence connected with Dudley's fate?'"

"But tell me, Edgar," said Mr. Dudley, "did you never suspect that Mr. Filmer himself had laboured to deprive me of the proofs of my innocence?"

"Never," answered Edgar. "Eda suspected him, I know; but I always thought she was

prejudiced. I also suspected him, but not of that. I thought he had practised on me one of his pious frauds."

"Mr. Norries told me," said Dudley, "that he had certainly taken means to stop your communication with the only men who were likely to have the power of proving that I quitted Lord Hadley at the exact spot where I asserted I had left him and walked on at once towards Barhampton."

"He did do so," replied Edgar, "and I discovered that he did; but you must recollect I had been severely injured by a blow on the head, and I attributed Filmer's conduct to an anxiety on his part to prevent my exerting myself at a time when I was certainly unfit for it. I was angry that he did so, and I taxed him with it. He boldly justified his conduct, asked me if even the exertion I had made had not nearly killed me, and then demanded, what would the consequences have been, had I made such exertion two days before. This satisfied

me, Dudley, and never till that moment which I have just been speaking of, did a suspicion of the truth cross my mind. However, if I had been anxious before to discover Clive's residence, I was now determined that I would do so, and as soon as possible I set out upon the pursuit. One of the men who had been tried for insurrection acknowledged that they had been supplied with arms from France, brought over in a vessel chartered by the communists of that country, at the port of Nantes. I knew it was the same in which Mr. Clive and Helen had quitted England, and to Nantes I accordingly went. I had obtained every clue that I possibly could, as to the proprietors of the vessel, before I set out, but my information aided me but little. No effort I could make enabled me to trace those whom I sought. I wandered all through Brittany, and La Vendée, and Normandy, and Touraine ; but it was all in vain. Beyond the town of Nantes itself I lost all trace, and at length, late in the spring of last

year, I returned to England. My father and Eda were by this time in London; and Filmer, I found, was absent in France. I told Eda all I had done. I tried to console her with hopes of still establishing your innocence. It was the only consolation the dear girl had; for my father, not judging rightly of her heart and mind, was eager to dissipate her gloomy thoughts, by forcing her into society. His house was filled with people from morning to night; but Eda remained almost entirely shut up in her own room, and would not go out to any public place, or any party. She never would believe that Filmer had been really anxious for your safety, and her doubts now affected me. A new suspicion took hold of me. Although he had made a pretence to my father of very different business in France, I suspected that he had gone to see Clive; and one day, when my father handed me over a letter of his, containing some interesting observations upon the state of France,—there is no

man more capable of making them,—I examined carefully the post-mark of the letter, and discovered the word Angers. In looking at the date of the letter, it was Tours. This was a discovery. He was deceiving my father, as well as myself; but I brought no rash charges—I have grown wonderfully prudent, Dudley; and I would not even write to Clive till I was aware that Filmer had left him, if, as I suspected, he was at Angers with him. Another month passed in impatient suspense, and my father threw out many hints of tours in different parts of Europe, which he thought might amuse Eda's mind. There were even preparations for travelling made, when suddenly Mr. Filmer again appeared amongst us. The very night after his arrival, I was informed by Sir Arthur that he intended to go to Italy, and thence by the Ionian Islands and Greece, to Constantinople. Eda and Filmer were to be his companions, and my presence was looked upon as a matter of course. I was not even invited—

it was taken for granted. But I was resolved not to go,—at least at once,—and therefore I took care to involve myself in engagements which could not easily be broken through. With one friend I laid a bet, a very heavy one, as to the result of three days' shooting on the moors. I promised my friend, Eldred, to be present at his marriage ; and in fact, I created for myself so many excuses, that my father was obliged to own it would be necessary for me to stop and join the party afterwards at Naples. I could see Mr. Filmer's face change when he heard this arrangement ; and a look of bitter gloom came upon it, which confirmed my former doubts. Without waiting for their departure, I at once wrote a letter to Clive himself, and addressed it ' Angers ;' but I was now suspicious of everything. I took it to the post myself, and I told him to whom I wrote all that had befallen you, begging him to address his reply to a hotel in London. Day after day passed by ; my father and the rest set out upon

their tour; and I began to fancy that I had been mistaken, for no letter came. I then determined that I would go over to Angers myself, and was sitting in the dining-room of my father's house—the only public room which had been left open when he went abroad—gloomily pondering, both over my own fate and yours, Dudley, when I saw, on the opposite side of the street, a figure which instantly made me start up and hurry to the window. It was Clive himself; and he was gazing up at the closed windows of the house, thinking, as he told me afterwards, that there was nobody in town, and proposing to go down to Brandon in search of me. He had received my letter, and as soon as possible had come over in person, leaving dear Helen in France. I need not tell you now all the particulars of what followed, for we shall have plenty of time, I trust, to dwell upon details which will interest you much. It may be only necessary to say, that the noble-spirited old man had been

kept in utter ignorance of an act having been charged upon you, which he had himself performed—an act, which in him was an act of justice, but in you might be considered as a crime. He told me that Helen had written to me often, and that although he had not seen what she wrote, he was sure that she had used such expressions as would have led me at once to perceive how Lord Hadley had met his death——”

“How was it?” exclaimed Dudley, interrupting him. “But I can guess—I can guess. Go on, Edgar.”

“Nay, it is soon told,” answered Edgar Adelon. “On that fatal night, Clive had learned from Mr. Norries the shameful persecution which my sweet Helen had suffered from Lord Hadley, and he was returning over the cliffs, with a heart full of angry feelings, when he heard a cry for help, and instantly recognised his daughter’s voice. Springing forward, he found the villain dragging her down towards

the sea-shore, where he expected, it seems, to meet with a boat, which would have carried them to France. Clive instantly struck him a furious blow. Lord Hadley let go Helen, and returned it, and another was given by Clive. Only those three blows were struck; but the third, coming from Mr. Clive's powerful arm, dashed the unfortunate wretch back upon the railings at the top of the cliff; the woodwork gave way, and he fell headlong to the bottom. Thus took place the death of Lord Hadley; and you have seen enough of Mr. Clive yourself to be sure that it was not with his consent or knowledge that the deed was imputed to you. As soon as he discovered from my letter that such was the case, he came to give himself up, and to clear you; and as he knew little of the means to be employed in such cases, he at first sought me at the hotel where I had ordered the letters to be addressed, and was thence directed to my father's London house. More by accident than by pos-

sessing any better information than his own, I advised him to follow what, as it has proved, was the best course he could have taken. I felt sure that, under the circumstances, no evil result could befall him from the open confession of the whole, which he proposed to make ; and I offered to go with him immediately to the Secretary of State, whom I know personally, and tell him the whole facts. He agreed perfectly to my views, and we set off at once. You know Clive's straightforward, almost abrupt, way of dealing ; but in this instance, it was understood and appreciated. The Secretary asked but few questions. Clive placed before him the letter which he had received from me ; told him that it was the first intelligence which had been given to him of an innocent man having been accused and condemned for a deed which he had performed ; and that he had instantly come over from France to tell the whole truth. The tale was so simple, and Clive's sincerity so clear, that

all doubts as to your share in the transaction were at an end. The only question was, how the case of Clive himself was to be dealt with; and the Secretary determined to leave him at liberty till his daughter and a labourer at the Grange, named Daniel Connor, could be brought to London, upon his undertaking to appear whenever he should be called upon, and to hold no communication in the meantime with either of the two who were summoned as witnesses. In the end, a full investigation took place at the Secretary of State's office, where a police magistrate of great keenness and discrimination was called upon to assist. The examinations of Helen and of Daniel Connor were conducted apart, without either of them having seen Mr. Clive. Helen told the story simply and exactly as her father had told it; and the man, after a momentary hesitation and some prevarication, on being informed that Clive had come over himself voluntarily to tell the whole tale, confirmed every particular which had been

previously stated. His evidence was compared with that which he had given before the coroner's jury and at your trial; and it was found that, although he had evidently given a colour to the truth on those two occasions, which left the jury to infer that you had committed the deed, he had not actually perjured himself. The intention, however, to procure your condemnation was so clear, that it led to farther inquiry; for in every other respect the man seemed honest and well-meaning, and the character that he bore in the country was exceedingly high. His veneration and regard for Clive did not sufficiently account for his conduct; and on being severely cross-questioned, he admitted that he had been prompted to give his evidence in the manner in which you heard it given. I am sorry to say that the prompter was one whose character and profession should have been the last to be sullied by such acts."

"I can guess whom you mean," replied Dudley. "But here comes Norries himself, and

I should much wish to ask him one question upon this matter—namely, why he did not himself either tell you that Clive had done the deed, when you were seeking for evidence in my defence, or give Mr. Clive information of my having been tried and condemned, though innocent.”

While he was speaking, Norries came up, and sat down beside them, and as he did not answer, although he must have heard part of what passed, Dudley addressed the question to himself. He replied, with a smile, “How ready all men are, Mr. Dudley, to judge upon insufficient grounds. You have jumped at the conclusion that I was aware of facts which had not in any way come to my cognizance. I will not deny that I felt the strongest possible suspicion that my brother-in-law Clive had killed Lord Hadley, knowing the vehemence of his nature, the warmth and tenderness of his love for his daughter, and the gross insults and injuries she had received. But I

had no right to inform others of my suspicions; and as to where Clive was, I never heard till yesterday. I was sure, however, that wherever he was, he would sooner or later do you justice; indeed, I do not know, and cannot comprehend, how the most upright and honest man that ever lived could suffer, either by his act or neglect, another to bear the imputation of a deed of his."

"He was deceived," answered Edgar Adelon. "He was kept without information. He was made to believe that suspicion rested upon him, and that if he returned to England, he would bring a blight and a shadow upon his honourable name, and a disgrace upon his child. He knew not that Dudley had ever been tried, far less that he had been condemned; and it is evident that Helen's letters to myself were all intercepted and destroyed."

"By whom?" demanded Norries.

"By the priest," replied Edgar.

"Ay, I remember," said Norries, thought-

fully. "There was a priest used to come down to the house, one Father Peter, they used to call him. I never saw him; but Clive represented him as upright and elevated in character and mind."

"He knows better now," answered Edgar; "for many of Mr. Filmer's insincere proceedings have been now so thoroughly exposed, that the blackest web of subtlety ever woven by the disciples of Loyola cannot conceal their falsehood and their baseness."

"Filmer!" said Norries, thoughtfully—"is that the same man whom they called Father Peter?"

"The same," replied Edgar. "But to return to my tale, Dudley. Clive's straightforward tale, and Helen's clear and candid evidence, backed by that of many of the servants at Clive Grange, who were more or less aware of Lord Hadley's previous conduct towards her, convinced the Secretary of State that there was no ground for the crown proceeding

against a man who had accidentally slain another in defence of his own child. He left it to the relations of the dead man to act as they liked ; but upon a clear view of the evidence, they were advised not to prosecute ; and thus ended the matter as affecting Clive. In regard to yourself, a full pardon immediately passed the great seal ; and I have the strongest and most positive assurance in writing, that everything shall be done, as soon as you return, to clear your reputation from the slightest stain. I felt, Dudley," continued Edgar, grasping his hand, "that your sympathy with me, and your indignation of the base treatment of one I love, had had a share, at least, in bringing so many misfortunes upon you, and I determined at once to set out to seek you, and bear you the happy tidings of your exculpation in person. Although Helen might feel some anxiety for my safety and health during a long voyage, and, perhaps, would have been better pleased, as far as she was personally concerned, had I

remained in England, she was far from trying to dissuade me ; and after seeing her and her father once more happily established at Clive Grange, I set out for this distant land as soon as I could find a ship. Shortly before I departed, I received a letter from my father, who had journeyed as far as Syria. He expressed some surprise that I had not joined him and Eda ; but, doubtless," added the young man, with a smile, " he was more surprised still when my next letter informed him that I had sailed for Australia. I gave him no particulars, nor assigned any reason for my going ; for I wished much, Dudley, to leave you free to act in any way you might think fit, and to consult with you upon my own future conduct as well as yours. There is no probability of the tidings of Clive's confession and your exculpation reaching my father from any public source, as the examination was conducted privately ; and I made it a particular request, both to Helen and her father, that they would not

speaking of the subject at all till my return. I will not conceal from you that there are difficulties and dangers, perhaps, before us both, prejudices of many kinds to be overcome—
ay, and the skill and cunning of a subtle adversary to be frustrated. I know him now, and depend upon it, he will never forgive the detection of his falsehood and his baseness.”

“Filmer!” said Norries, who had been meditating gravely for several minutes—“Filmer! Father Peter! That throws fresh light upon the whole. Mr. Dudley, I should like to speak with you for a few moments quite alone; and afterwards we had better go to breakfast, for this mountain air gives a keen appetite.”

“I must catch or shoot our breakfast first,” replied Dudley, “unless you will content yourselves with some salt provisions which I have laid up here.”

“Let us walk down to the lake together,” replied Norries. “We can converse as we go; and you can exercise your skill in angling,

while I give you some information that may be useful."

Dudley willingly agreed; and when he and Norries rejoined the party above, after an absence of more than an hour, they brought with them plenty of fish, and Dudley's face bore an expression of thoughtful satisfaction, as if his conversation with Norries had added a new relief to that which the intelligence of Edgar had afforded.

CHAPTER VI.

EDA BRANDON sat in her room alone. Her fair face was somewhat paler than when first it was presented to the reader's eyes, and the look of sparkling cheerfulness was no longer there. It had grown very thoughtful ; but yet those who had seen her only four days before, if they had keen and remarking eyes, would have perceived, when they looked at her now, that, from some cause, a great alteration had very recently taken place ; that an expression of careless despondency was gone ; that there was, in fact, the light of hope renewed, upon her countenance. During the

long pilgrimage she had made with her uncle, it must not be supposed that Eda had cherished the melancholy which had fallen upon her, that she had neglected any reasonable opportunity of diverting her thoughts from the bitter subject of a hopeless passion. All that was beautiful in nature ; all that was fine and admirable in art ; all that was rich in association, or decorated by memories, she eagerly sought and calmly dwelt upon, feeling that they were objects which might well give the mind occupation, without altogether jarring with the sadder tones which rose continually from the heart. It was only society that she avoided—the society of the world, which, in reality and truth, is not society at all ; for the mere herding together of a certain number of human beings, with hardly a thought or feeling in common, deserves a very different name. There might be, also, a certain portion of apprehension in her thus flying from the mixed crowd. She had a sort of presentiment that her uncle

would seek to force some match upon her, in the idle expectation of weaning her heart from a passion which, although it had not lately been mentioned between them, she felt convinced he must see traces of each day ; and as at every instant she felt that her love for Dudley could never decay, as she longed to be with him more and more, she was anxious to avoid anything which could bring on discussions equally painful to herself and to Sir Arthur. Thus their journey had passed in visiting many distant scenes, and so far as this could afford amusement, Eda had gained something by the continual change ; but whenever they stopped, the same dark gloom fell upon her, and it became the more profound when, at the end of a tour even longer than had been at first proposed, they returned to take up their residence at Brandon.

Sir Arthur, with the pertinacity which characterized him, and the somewhat impenetrable blindness to the character of others, which is

universal, I believe, in vain and self-sufficient men, still pursued his purposes with regard to Eda ; and thinking that the opportunities of a country residence would be most favourable to his schemes, filled the house with gentlemen, each of whom, he thought, might be a suitable match for his fair niece, and who were not at all indifferent to the advantages of wedding broad lands and well-economized revenues. There was a middle-aged peer, and a young and wealthy baronet, and a simple esquire, enormously rich in everything but brains, and a captain of dragoons, the nephew and presumptive heir to a duke, who, to say the truth, was the best of the party, for he was a man of feeling, of character, and of thought, a little enthusiastic, indeed, in his notions, but whose imagination, in all her flights, soared heavenward. He was the only one who even caught Eda's ear for more than a moment, and he did so under somewhat curious circumstances, for it was neither his abilities, the

richness of his fancy, nor the generous character of his mind, sparkling through his conversation, which attracted her attention. On the contrary, as she saw from the first that he sought her society rather eagerly, she was for a time inclined to withdraw from him more decidedly than from the others, when one day, shortly after his arrival, he said, almost abruptly, "Miss Brandon, you are very sad, and I can see that all these people tease you. I can divine the cause; but do not class me with them, for if you suppose that I have come here with the same views and purposes, you are mistaken."

"I do not exactly understand you," said Eda, gravely, "nor can I admit exactly that my uncle's friends do tease me. I am not fond of much society, but that is all."

"There is one way of explaining what I mean, Miss Brandon," answered the other, "which will make you understand me without referring to other men's views. It is by making

you a confidant of that which is, indeed, a great secret. I am engaged to a lady, whom I love most sincerely, and have, indeed, been engaged for more than two years. She is not rich, and I am very poor, and we say nothing about our mutual understanding, for fear it should give offence to those with whom my hopes of fortune rest. I have told you this, because I think it will put your mind at ease, so far as I am concerned, and because I wish much to speak with you upon another subject, of much interest, which may occupy more time than we can now command alone.—There, I knew how it would be! Here comes Lord Kingsland, to say his soft nothings.”

“Which I certainly shall not wait to hear,” replied Eda, with a smile.

This brief conversation had taken place the day before, and now Eda sat with an open letter before her, in the hand-writing of her cousin Edgar. It was light and cheerful, though not very definite; but there were two or three words

in it which conveyed to Eda's mind more than the general tone seemed to imply. All he said was, "Do not give way to melancholy, my sweet cousin. Shake off the gloom which hung upon you when you departed, for the melancholy is now without cause, and the gloom is very useless. Storm-clouds last but a day or two, Eda; the wind is up, and has wafted yours away."

Eda knew that Edgar would not so have written to her had he not had better hopes in store than he ventured to express; and although she had shared her uncle's surprise when she first heard that Edgar had gone to Australia, she had felt what Sir Arthur had not felt—that he had not taken that journey without a powerful object.

It was the spring of the year; the days had not lengthened much, and it was still dark at the dinner hour. Eda had dined in her own room the day before, but now she prepared to go down with a lighter heart than she had known for long, long months; and, ringing for

her maid, conversed with her, from time to time, while she dressed her hair. When the girl's task was done, she went down to the house-keeper's room, not without having remarked the change in her mistress; and there she told her good old fellow-servant, with a shrewd and self-satisfied look, "Miss Brandon's getting over it, I can tell you, Mrs. Gregson. The captain's to be the man, I'm sure."

In the meantime, Eda proceeded to the drawing-room with a lightened heart, and diversified the ceremonious moments which occur while people are waiting for their meal, by damping, if not extinguishing, any hopes Sir Arthur's guests might have conceived.

"Really, you look resplendent to-night, Miss Brandon," said the peer, seating himself beside her. "The country air seems quite to have refreshed you."

"I trust it may have the same effect upon your lordship in time," replied Eda; and a

slight smile that came upon the lips of the young dragoon gave more point than she intended to her words.

Lord Kingsland, however, was not so easily driven from his attack, and he replied, "Oh! I do not think country air has any effect upon me. I am so much accustomed to spend the whole spring in London, that the air of the great city at that season of the year agrees with me by habit better than that of the country."

"I feel very differently about it," replied Eda. "I should have thought, from my own experience, that fifty or sixty springs in London would shrivel any one to a mere mummy."

"Miss Brandon, Miss Brandon!" exclaimed the peer, with a smile, which he intended to be perfectly courteous and good-humoured, but from which he could not banish an expression of mortification—"I see the air must be detrimental to one's looks, at all events, or you would not pile so many years upon my head."

Eda would fain have apologized and explained, but Lord Kingsland had enjoyed enough of her conversation for that evening, and he soon after walked away.

The man of money next approached, dressed in the very height of the fashion, and began speaking of the beauty and fertility of some parts of the estate of Brandon, remarking how wide a space it occupied in the map which hung in the hall.

“It is, indeed, of a goodly length and breadth,” replied Eda; “almost too extensive to be held by one individual. I am sufficient of a politician to think it would be much better if large properties were prevented from increasing. Moderate fortunes in the hands of many must be better for a country than immense fortunes in the hands of a few.”

“Very Spartan notions, indeed,” said the young gentleman; “but I dare say you would not carry them out in practice.”

“Undoubtedly,” replied Eda, gaily; “I would prevent any man, having a large estate, from acquiring another by any means.”

There was no reply to this bold assertion; and the baronet who followed seemed likely to call upon himself some as decided an expression of opinion, when dinner was announced, and the peer exercised his prerogative of taking Miss Brandon into the dining-room. The meal passed off tranquilly and stupidly enough, and the pudding and tart course was being removed, when a dull, heavy sound, like that of a cannon, made the windows rattle in the sashes. Nobody took any notice, however, for Mr. Filmer was describing, with powerful eloquence, one of the ceremonies of the Romish church, the performance of which he and Sir Arthur had witnessed at St. Peter’s. At the interval of about a minute, however, the same sound was repeated, and after another interval the report was heard again.

“Those are minute-guns,” said Sir Arthur

Adelon. "Some ship got upon the Dog-bank, I dare say, and the wind is blowing very high, too."

"I saw a very fine large bark just coming round the point," said Lord Kingsland, "while I was taking a stroll upon the downs this evening. Probably it is her guns we hear, for there was no other vessel in sight."

"She must have passed the Dog, then, far," said Mr. Filmer, "and has probably run upon the spit beyond Beach-rock. The wind sets thence, so that we should hear the guns as clearly as we do now."

"More likely she has gone bump upon the shore," said Sir Arthur, "or the low reefs which lie two or three hundred yards out. She would try to hug the land as close as possible, to get into the bay, and avoid the fury of the gale."

While these words were spoken on all parts, several more guns were distinctly heard; and Eda, rising, with her face very pale, as the

first dishes of the dessert were set upon the table, retired, saying, "I will send out some of the servants, my dear uncle. They may, perhaps, give the fishermen some help in ease of need."

"They will never arrive in time, my love," replied Sir Arthur, "if the ship have got ashore. It must be fully twelve miles up to the spit, or more—but do as you like."

"I will certainly send, if you have no objection," replied Eda. "The men may aid to save a human life, and a walk or ride of twelve miles is nothing in comparison."

Retiring into the drawing-room, Eda immediately rang the bell, and ordered as many of the servants as could be spared to get upon horseback, and ride on as fast as possible in the direction from which the sound of the guns seemed to proceed. Her orders were clear, calm, and distinct, although her pale face and her trembling hand seemed to show that she was greatly agitated. "Call all the country

people as you go," she said; "and tell them to hurry down to give assistance with whatever their experience of the coast may lead them to think is necessary. I know," she continued, "that the salvation of human life is not rewarded by the law or by government, while enormous rewards follow the saving of property; but tell the men that I will give ten guineas for every life that is saved by their exertions."

"Ten guineas, ma'am?" said the butler, to whom she spoke. "That is a great deal."

"Ten guineas, or more," replied Eda, in a firm tone, "if it be necessary to quicken their efforts. Now, make haste." And lifting her eyes to the door, she perceived that the young captain of dragoons was standing just upon the nearer side of the threshold. She coloured a little as she saw him, for real enthusiasms have generally a certain degree of shyness with them; but as soon as she had ceased speaking, the officer advanced, saying, "I will go with

the men, Miss Brandon. They need somebody to lead and to direct, and I am not unaccustomed to such transactions. Hark! the guns seem to have ceased, but that is no sign that the poor souls are out of danger, and I will set out directly."

"I will not thank you, Captain M——," said Eda Brandon, "for I have no personal interest in these poor people; but your own heart will thank you, and God will bless you for your readiness on this occasion."

He left her and departed; and Eda sat in solitude, with her head resting on her hand, for nearly half an hour, with feelings which it would be very difficult to describe, for they were sensations for which no reasonable cause could be assigned—phantom fears, which seemed to rise out of the depth of night, unevoked by anything more tangible than themselves. At length, she was joined by the rest of the party, and strove to maintain a tranquil and equal demeanour, although the utter indif-

ference she saw around her to the fate of a number of human beings, perishing, perhaps, within a few miles, rather tended to increase than to diminish the agitation which she felt. Mr. Filmer sat down to play at chess with the younger baronet, and beat him most signally, giving him a piece. Sir Arthur and Lord Kingsland played at piquet; and she was left to the tender mercies of the rich young commoner, who entertained her with an account of graperies and pine-pits, gave her a lecture upon the horticultural gardens, and was even deviating into some account of stock and piggeries, when Eda herself turned the conversation. Eleven o'clock arrived, and nobody appeared, but Eda made no movement to go. The chessmen were by this time discarded; three games of piquet had been played, and Sir Arthur had rung for wine and water, when Captain M—— entered with a calm and easy air, and walking up at once to Eda, without taking the least notice of any one else, he said,

in a low tone, "There is some one in the library who will be glad to see you, and whom you will be glad to see. Do not agitate yourself," he continued, seeing that she trembled very much—"all is safe."

But before I proceed to relate what followed, I must notice the events which had taken place between the time at which Captain M—— set out on his expedition and that at which he returned.

CHAPTER VII.

THE night was very dark, and blowing a gale of wind. The blast was not, indeed, directly upon the shore at the point of the coast nearest to Brandon; but, about seven miles to the eastward, the line of the land took a bend towards the south, forming a low shingley beach, with a spit of sand running out into the sea for full half a mile beyond the southernmost point of the cliffs, and against this shingley beach the gale blew hard and direct. The distance from Brandon House to the sea, in a straight line, was less than two miles; but Captain M——, followed by five or six servants, took his way across the country towards that part of the

coast on which he judged the ship must have stranded. Riding on rapidly, he arrived, in about three quarters of an hour, at a village some nine miles from Brandon ; and calling at one or two of the houses, he found that all the men, warned by the signals of distress, had gone down to the shore to give assistance. He learned, too, some farther particulars of the disaster which had occurred, and the exact spot where it had taken place. Pushing on without farther pause, then, he rode through the little village, where, as may be remembered, Edgar Adelon obtained his first interview with Martin Oldkirk ; and issuing forth at the farther end, he soon after came upon the sea-shore, where a lighted tar-barrel and several links shed a red glare over a terrible scene, which was also, from time to time, partially illuminated by glimpses of the moon, as the grey clouds, hurrying rapidly past, left her bright face visible for a moment, and then concealed it again beneath their swarthy veil.

A tall and beautiful vessel appeared aground at the distance of less than a hundred yards from the beach. The masts were all still standing, and the fine tracery of the rigging, partially seen by the lights upon the shore, was now and then rendered completely visible when the moonlight broke forth behind for a moment, and brightened the stormy sky. Around the burning tar-barrel were several groups of men, with some women and children; and farther down upon the beach, even amidst the spray and foam, were others, one of whom held up a link, half extinguished by the dashing waves. An awful surf was falling in thunder upon the shore; and each mountain-wave, as it rolled up, struck the unfortunate vessel on the stern and windward side, making a clear breach over her as she heeled towards the beach. When the moon was hidden, only the bow and the fore-mast could be seen by the lights on the shore, the rest of the ship being enveloped in darkness,

except where the white surf rushed pouring over the hull, and sprang glittering up amongst the cordage ; but when the momentary moon shone out, the shrouds, the tops, and many parts of the rigging, were seen loaded with human beings, striving in agony to postpone the fate which seemed ready to fall upon them. There were shrieks and cries for help, and loud shouts of direction and command ; but all were so mingled with the noise of the rushing wind, and the thunder of the billows upon the shore, that everything was indistinct, rising in one loud, screaming roar to the spot at which the young officer had arrived.

Drawing in his horse, he paused to gaze for a moment and consider what was expedient to be done ; and at the same moment he perceived some of the men, with that gallant and intrepid daring which characterizes the boatmen on the English coast, endeavouring to launch a boat a little to windward of the stranded ship. With a loud cheer, they pushed her down into the

water as a wave receded, and, with a tremendous effort, were shoving her off, when again the billows returned with a furious sweep, capsized her in a moment, and nothing was seen, for several seconds, but the figures of the men struggling in the surf, and the black hull of the boat surrounded by the whirling eddies of the retiring wave. For a moment it seemed as if several of the gallant fellows would be lost; but some clung to the boat, others scrambled back to the shore, and one, who was carried out, striking hard for life, was caught by another wave, and dashed back again, bleeding and almost senseless, on the beach.

Springing to the ground with several of the servants, Captain M—— hurried down to the principal group upon the beach, and put one or two questions, the import of which not being clearly seen at first by the men he addressed, they answered somewhat sullenly.

“My good sir,” he said, speaking to a large, square-built man of the middle age, who seemed

to be one of the principal boatmen, "I have been accustomed to these things, and aided to save many lives on a worse coast than this. The same means may prove effectual here, but we must have recourse to them immediately, or the ship will be a complete wreck."

"In two hours there wont be one of her timbers together," answered the man, dully.

"Then the more need to get the people off her at once," said Captain M——.

"Ay, if you can do it," said the boatman, turning away.

"Stay a moment," cried the young officer, in a tone of command. "Has any one got a gun with a large bore, and a good long hank of stout but thin cord?"

The object seemed to strike the man instantly, and turning sharply round, he laid his broad hand upon the young officer's shoulder, exclaiming, with an oath, "That's a good thought. There's my large duck-gun will do capitally; and as for a cord, you can't have anything

better than one of our fish-lines. It's both light and strong."

All was changed in a moment; the efforts of the crowd were turned in a different direction; hope seemed to revive; a number of fishing-lines were brought forth, the heavy gun was placed in Captain M——'s hands, powder was procured, a bullet pierced and attached to one end of the strong cord, while the other end was fastened tightly to a thick rope. Every one aided; and Captain M—— having charged the piece, advanced as far as he could down to the beach, so that the waves, as they flowed up, reached his knees, and then prepared to fire. Before he did so, however, he turned to those behind him, saying, "We shall have to try several times before we succeed, so do not be disappointed if the first shot fails." Then elevating the gun, he pulled the trigger, in the hope that the bullet would carry the line over the rigging of the ship. As he had foreseen, however, the first attempt was unsuccessful.

The sudden explosion of the powder broke the line before the bullet had got a foot from the mouth of the gun.

“We must have less powder and a smaller ball,” said the young officer. “Some one cut a piece out of my glove, here, to wrap it in. Perhaps we shall succeed better this time.”

Nor was he disappointed; the ball carried the line clear over the ship, between the main and fore masts, and fell into the sea some way beyond. The unhappy voyagers seemed to have comprehended the efforts made for their safety, and had watched with eager eyes and in profound silence everything that was done. Not a word, not a cry was uttered from the moment the first shot was fired; and even when the second and more successful attempt was made, they were all silent still, for the line was so fine, they did not perceive that the efforts of their friends on shore had been successful till the gestures of the crowd, rather than the voice of one of the boatmen, speaking through a

trumpet, drew the attention of a sailor to the spot where the line had fallen. The directions were then given to run it through a pulley, and gently haul up the rope, and this being accomplished, the rope was made fast at both ends, and a means of communication, however frail, established with the shore.

A shout of joy burst forth from the people of the ship, and a loud cheer answered it from the beach.

There were many difficulties still to be overcome, however ; for as the ship rocked to and fro when the waves struck her, there was a great chance of the rope snapping, especially if burdened with the weight of a man ; but the son of one of the boatmen, a lad of about thirteen years of age, volunteered to try the dangerous path, with a light hawser made fast round his middle. Slowly and with difficulty he pursued his way, holding on both by hands and feet ; but his perilous task was at length accomplished, and as soon as the hawser was firmly

fixed, he returned to the shore, bringing back the end of the rope first sent, which had been passed through a pulley, so as to play easily.

Several of the men then came over from the ship without much difficulty ; but this method was so slow, that Captain M—— proposed another plan, which was immediately adopted when it was found that there were a number of women and children in the bark. One of the sails of a small lugger was detached from the yard, and the corners being gathered together and made quite secure, it was slung upon the hawser, and connected with the rope passed through the pulley. It was thus easily moved backwards and forwards between the ship and the shore. Two, and sometimes three people, were brought to land at once ; and joy and satisfaction displayed itself in every form and shape amongst those who were rescued from the grave.

During the whole time that these operations had been proceeding, two men were seen standing together in the fore-top, who, though they

had busied themselves and assisted greatly in fastening the hawser and in passing the ropes, showed no anxiety to save themselves; aiding, indeed, to put the women and children into the sail, but remaining perfectly calm and motionless, while the others passed to the shore. There was something in their manner and appearance which struck Captain M—— not a little, and advancing to one of the persons who had first come over, he inquired who those two persons were.

“They are passengers from Sidney, sir,” replied the man; “perfect gentlemen both of them, and two brave fellows as ever lived, for if it had not been for them we should have all lost heart long ago.”

While he was speaking, some of the men who remained on board seemed by their gestures to urge the two gentlemen to go over; and the shorter of the two, taking a child in his arms from one of the sailors—it was the only child left—stepped into the sail, and holding

fast by the rope above, was speedily drawn to land. A woman, who had been brought across some time before with two other children, now rushed down almost into the sea when this new freight approached, as if afraid the man would drop the child. But the young gentleman—for he seemed very young, and was evidently of a superior class—placed the little boy safely in her arms, saying, “He is quite safe and warm.”

The woman prayed God to bless him; but at the same moment his hand was taken by Captain M——, and shaken heartily, while one of the servants exclaimed, “Mr. Adelon!—hurrah! hurrah!” and half the people on the beach took up the cry, and waved their hats joyfully. But Captain M—— and Edgar Adelon were speaking together eagerly and in a low voice, while the latter pointed once or twice to the fore-top of the stranded vessel, as if explaining to his friend that some one whom they both knew was there. Several

other persons then landed, so that the number upon the shore amounted to nearly sixty, besides the inhabitants of the neighbouring huts and villages. Amongst the last who appeared was Edward Dudl  y, and he was warmly greeted by Captain M——, though his appearance now, it must be remarked, notwithstanding his being somewhat worn and tempest-tossed, was very different from that of the nameless fisherman by the nameless lake.

The servants of Sir Arthur Adelon were standing at some distance while their young master spoke with Captain M——; and Dudley, taking the arm of the latter, walked slowly away with him up the beach, and out of the light of the fire; but Edgar turned to speak for a few minutes with his fellow-travellers, giving kind and liberal orders for their comfort and accommodation.

“I do not wish,” said Dudley, addressing Captain M——, “to be recognised just at present. I will choose my own time and my

own manner; and you may, doubtless, divine the reasons, as I know you have been made acquainted with a considerable portion of my history."

"I can easily conceive," replied Captain M——, "that you have a great many painful and unpleasant things to go through, which you would desire to do in your own way; but I congratulate you most sincerely, Mr. Dudley, not alone upon your salvation this night, but upon your restoration to your country and your friends, your property and your reputation. I trust this storm will be the last you will have to encounter."

"God only knows," replied Dudley; "but for the future, my dear sir, I shall be less apt than in earlier years to give way either to hope or to despair."

"Hope is the best of the two," replied the young officer, in a lighter tone. "It comes from Heaven, and is an ingredient, more or less, in everything that is good, and high, and

holy. The other comes from below, leading to all that is evil, and dark, and disastrous. Choose hope, then, my good friend. But here comes some one quickly after us. I trust none of the men are much injured?"

"None of the survivors," answered Dudley, gravely, "but twenty or thirty perished when the ship first struck."

"Mr. Adelon sent me, sir," said a rough, but not unpleasant voice, "to show one of you two gentlemen the way to my cottage. It is the gentleman who was on the wreck," he continued, looking at Dudley, who said, in reply, that he was willing to go wherever the other should lead.

"Then I will leave you now," said Captain M——, in a low voice, "and your secret is perfectly safe with me, depend upon it; but I trust that we shall meet again before I depart for London, and if not here, in the great city."

"I will certainly find you out," replied Dudley, "for the scene and the circumstances

in which we first met, are never to be obliterated from memory, nor the kindness with which you soothed and relieved, at a moment when I thought there was none to help."

They then parted, and after taking a few steps forward with the stout, broad-set countryman who had been sent up to him, Dudley inquired how far they were from Brandon.

"Hard upon eleven miles, sir," replied the man.

"Then the place where we run ashore must be what they call Beachrock Spit, I suppose?" rejoined Dudley.

"Just so, sir," said the man; "the rock that names it is about two miles farther on, t'other side of the spit, as we call it; but the village is up hard by, not above a quarter of a mile inland."

"Do you know a man of the name of Martin Oldkirk?" asked Dudley, after advancing a few paces farther. "He must live in that village, I think."

“Yes, I know him, sir,” answered the countryman, abruptly. “What do you want with him?”

“I want some conversation with him,” answered Dudley. “I bring him some news of distant friends, and had, indeed, brought him a letter; but that, with all the rest of my baggage, is in the unfortunate ship, which will be a total wreck before to-morrow.”

“I’m sorry for that, sir,” said his companion; “for, to tell you the truth, I am Martin Oldkirk myself, so you may speak away as fast as you please.”

“By and bye will do,” answered Dudley, “for I shall be very glad, Oldkirk, if you can let me lodge in your cottage for a night or two. At all events, you will allow me to dry my clothes there, and while that is doing, we can talk of other things.”

“I should be very happy to lodge you, sir,” replied the man, in a civil tone; “but, Lord

bless you, sir! it is not fit for such as you; and besides, there's but one bed and a bare bedstead in the place."

"The bare bedstead will do well enough for me," replied Dudley, "at least for the present, and to-morrow, perhaps, you will be able to procure me something else. Doubtless to-night every house and every bed in the place will have more than its fair share of occupants."

"We may be quite sure of that," answered Martin Oldkirk; "but I can get you some good hay and a clean pair of sheets, and that, with plenty of coats and things to keep you warm, will be better lodging than where you were like to have lodged an hour or two ago."

"That is true," answered Dudley; "and I should be a fool to grumble. You know a certain Mr. Norries, Oldkirk, do you not?"

"That I do," cried the man, with a start. "Poor gentleman, I am sorry for him! He deserved better, but he might have got worse; and one thing will always make his heart light.

He never betrayed any one, though he might have got off himself if he had peached against others. But he always was an upright man, and readier to hurt himself than any one else. But I can't help thinking of him often, and how hard it is that he should be out there working like a galley-slave, when he only wished to free his country. I dare say he's very sad-like, isn't he, sir ? For I take it, you come from that place, don't you ?”

“ Make your mind easy about his fate,” answered Dudley, “ for he was well and happy when I saw him, and would not, I believe, come back again to England, even if they would let him. He is under no restraint either, except that he cannot return from banishment.”

“ Ay, they will find out what a man they've lost,” answered Oldkirk. “ I should have liked to have seen his hand-writing once again, however ; but here we are just at the cottage, and I will blow you up a fire in a minute, and then run and get some things that you may want—a

glass of brandy-and-water wouldn't be amiss, nor against Father Mathew either ; for I am quite sure that the doctor would order it for you, after having gone through such a business."

"I'm accustomed to privation in storm and tempest," answered Dudley, entering the cottage ; "so do not give yourself much trouble about provisions, my good friend." But, for some reason or another, Martin Oldkirk, though, as we have seen, not given at all times to very intense courtesy, was determined to do the best he could to make his guest comfortable ; and having blown the smouldering embers of his fire into a blaze, and piled on a quantity of mingled coal and wood, he went out again upon his hospitable errand.

Dudley took off his coat and waistcoat to dry them at the fire, and drawing a pocket-book from the pocket of the former, examined the papers which it contained carefully, to ascertain that they had not been injured by the

sea-water, the spray of the waves having dashed over him for several hours. The leathern cover of the book was completely wet, but the contents were safe enough; and after seeing that some documents, apparently official, were all uninjured, he read over by a candle, which his host had lighted, some memoranda written in a clear clerk-like hand.

“Ay, if he will answer me,” he said, commenting as he read; “but I doubt the fact. It is most unfortunate, the loss of my baggage. It cannot be helped, however; and after all, it is not vengeance I seek. Nevertheless, the power to thwart this man’s evil schemes were something;” and sitting down by the fire-side, he fell into thoughts from which he was roused, in about twenty minutes, by the sudden lifting of the latch of the door, and the entrance of Edgar Adelon and Captain M——.

“They are all safe,” said Edgar. “And now what will you do, Dudley? I shall ride on to Brandon at once.”

“And I will remain here, Edgar,” replied the other, “if you are quite sure that none of the servants recognised me. I remembered the butler’s face at once.”

“I do not believe that any one saw you,” replied Edgar; “and I suppose the best plan will be to act in the manner that was previously arranged; for our shipwreck here,” he added, with a smile, “has merely landed us a hundred miles nearer Brandon.”

“The only thing,” replied Dudley, “that is necessary, is not to mention to any one my return to England, till I have time to arrange all my plans; nor, indeed, to say that you have met with me at all, or heard anything concerning me.”

“But, Eda,” said the young gentleman; “what to her, Dudley?”

“Oh! tell her, of course,” replied his friend. “I would not keep her in unnecessary suspense for a moment; and she will see the

necessity of her acting differently towards others."

A slight smile came upon the lip of Captain M—— as he heard their conversation. "I do not know whether you are aware," he said, "that there are a good many guests at Brandon—reputed suitors of the young lady. Indeed, it is more like the hall of Ulysses during his absence than anything else. But I suppose," he continued, with a gay glance towards Dudley, "the wandering king of Ithaca will some day soon return to claim his own, and drive these daring mortals from the gates."

His words did not cheer Dudley, for there were still too many difficulties in his path—too many painful circumstances in his situation, for anything like gay hope to brighten the cloudy aspect of his fate; and as he did not himself reply, Edgar reverted to what they had been speaking of before, and said, "Well, I will ride on then at once, and I suppose I

shall hear from you as to farther proceedings."

"Oh yes, I shall easily find a messenger," replied Dudley ; and once more shaking hands warmly with Captain M——, he saw him and his companion depart.

Little delay was made upon the road by Captain M—— and Edgar Adelon, although the latter had a strong inclination to choose the right-hand road, where it parted from the high-way to Barhampton, leading direct to Clive Grange. He refrained, however, remembering that his father must know of the wreck, and might hear that he was on board. On arriving at Brandon House, the tranquil aspect of all things, and the servant's reply that Sir Arthur was playing at piquet, showed him that no great anxiety on his account had found its way into his father's bosom ; and consequently proceeding to the library himself, he requested Captain M—— to send Eda to him, as we have seen he did. The moment she appeared

he took her in his arms and kissed her with fraternal affection, saying, "I have just escaped death, dearest Eda, and I wanted to see you before I see any one else, for I have good news for you. Dudley is well—is here in England, and has received a full pardon."

Eda turned very pale, pressed her hand upon her heart, and grasped the arm of a chair for support. "Stay, stay, Edgar," she said, "do not tell me too much at once. A full pardon, do you say? But still the stain will remain upon his name."

Edgar drew back a step, and gazed at her gravely, almost sternly. "And would that make any difference to you, Eda, when you knew him, when you felt him, to be innocent?" he demanded.

Eda waved her hand, with a look of reproach—"None, Edgar, none," she answered. "You cannot suppose such a thing for a moment; but it will make a great difference to him. I know Dudley well, and I feel sure that

these events will cast a shadow over his whole life, if his innocence cannot be clearly established. But yet, I will not regret it," she cried, rising with a brighter look, and laying her hand upon her cousin's arm. "It will give me the means, dear Edgar, of proving to him what devotion and attachment a woman's heart is capable of. The vision of my young love, when first he and I knew each other, now eight years ago, will now indeed be realized. I thought then how happy it would make me to show such a man as that, that no circumstances of fortune, no inducements, no unworthy obstacles, could affect in the slightest degree my attachment, when once given upon just and reasonable grounds. Now I can prove it to him all, and I am ready to prove it."

"I am sorry, dear girl, to dispel your visions of devotion," answered Edgar, gaily; "but here, though you can make him as happy as man need be, by giving him your fair hand

and your true heart, you cannot cheer him under the doubt and suspicion of the world, for from that he is now quite cleared. His pardon was not granted till his innocence was proved beyond a doubt, by the acknowledgment of him who did the deed for which he has been so great a sufferer ; and be assured that he will not rest satisfied until, by act of parliament, his condemnation is reversed. I will tell you more hereafter, dear cousin, and now I will go and see if I can find fitter clothes to appear in this smart house ; for during the last year and a half, I have been much more accustomed to sit in ships' cabins, or to range wild woods, than to take my place in a gay drawing-room. But remember, Eda, not one word of Dudley's return, or of his pardon. There is much to be done and thought of."

Eda would fain have had some explanations regarding the wreck of the vessel which brought her cousin over, but Edgar answered gaily, "I will tell all that to the assembled multitude in

the drawing-room;" and then he, in turn, asked questions about Clive Grange, and its inhabitants; but Eda replied in the same tone in which he had spoken, "I will tell you all that to-morrow, Edgar. You cannot see Helen to-night—nor, indeed, to-morrow either, for she and Mr. Clive are both absent, I find, and do not return till the end of the week." With that they parted.

CHAPTER VIII.

ABOUT an hour and a half after Edgar had left him, Dudley was seated with Martin Oldkirk at a very homely meal ; but it was good, though plain, and the gentleman had shared, or rather more than shared, with his companion, the small portion of brandy which the labouring man had brought. Either Dudley's spirits had risen, or he had assumed a greater degree of cheerfulness than he really felt. He was by nature frank and free, as the good old English term goes, although early misfortunes had—as we have shown in his room at Cambridge—given a thoughtful cast to an imaginative mind.

If, occasionally, he seemed a little proud or haughty, it was with his equals or his superiors in rank, where a feeling that impaired circumstances in himself might generate a sense of condescension in them, induced him, by a certain coldness of manner, to repel that vainest form of pride. With those inferior to him, his manner was very different. Calm, easy, certain of his own position and of their estimation of it, he ran no chance of offending by too great familiarity, or of checking by too great reserve. He was well aware that the lower classes are much keener observers than the general world gives them credit for being, and that their estimation of their superiors in station is generally founded on much more just grounds than those on which men who are accustomed to judge by mere conventional standards too frequently rely.

Oldkirk had become easy in his society, and their conversation, though not, perhaps, exactly gay, was cheerful and interesting. Dudley de-

scribed the house that Norries had built for himself, his habits, his manner of life, the difficulties, the dangers, the pleasures, and the wild freedom of an Australian settler; and Martin Oldkirk questioned, and talked, and discussed, as if his companion had been an old friend. They put their feet to the fire, they gazed into the glowing embers; they leaned on either side of the table in meditative chat, and the high-born, high-bred gentleman felt that he was speaking with a man of considerable natural powers, who, though uncultivated, was not ignorant, and though not always courteous, rarely actually vulgar.

At length Dudley drew out his pocket-book, and taking forth the memoranda which he had previously examined, looked over them for a moment, and then inquired, in an ordinary tone, "Pray did you ever know a person of the name of Filmer—Peter Filmer?"

The man started from his seat as if he had been struck; his whole countenance worked, his

lips quivered, his brow contracted, and his sharp eyes fixed upon Dudley, with a fierce and angry stare. It seemed as if he were deprived of the power of utterance, for though his under jaw moved, as if he would have spoken, he spoke not, but struck the table a hard blow with his clenched fist.

“What is the matter?” exclaimed Dudley. “I did not intend to agitate you in this manner. I had no idea that such simple words could produce such emotion.”

Martin Oldkirk cast himself down again upon the settle from which he had risen, pressing his hands upon his eyes; and when Dudley added a few words more, he exclaimed, in a loud, harsh voice, “Hold your tongue, hold your tongue! you have named a fiend, and you have raised one!”

“I did not intend it, I can assure you,” replied Dudley; “let us speak of something else.”

“No!” cried the man, “I can neither speak nor think of anything else now that name is

mentioned.—Let me look at that paper ; let me see what is put down there.”

“I have no objection,” answered Dudley ; “but if it is to agitate you thus, you had really a great deal better forbear.”

The man did not answer, but stretched forth his hand ; and Dudley gave him the paper. He then laid it down before him, drew the single candle closer to him, and supporting his broad forehead with his clasped hands, and leaning his elbows on the board, gazed upon the memoranda with a haggard and staring eye. He remained in the same position for fully ten minutes, without uttering one word, and then, pushing the paper across to Dudley, he said, in a much calmer tone, “That is Mr. Norries’s writing :”

“It is,” answered Dudley ; “but I am quite sure he had no idea the questions he had there put down for me to ask would agitate you so terribly.”

“He should have known, he should have

known," said Martin Oldkirk, with stern bitterness; "but it matters not. I shall have recovered myself before to-morrow morning, and we will then talk more—but yet, tell me first, what have you to do with this man?—This—this——" but it seemed he could not utter the word, and after breaking off the sentence abruptly, he added, "Have you ever seen him? Do you know him?"

"I have seen him, do know him," answered Dudley; "and I have every reason to believe that he has endeavoured to injure me most basely."

Dudley paused, and thought for a moment or two, and then added, "I had better, perhaps, tell you how; for you had some share in the business."

"I?—I?" exclaimed Martin Oldkirk. "What had I to do between you and him? I have not seen him for many long years. I knew Sir Arthur Adelon was here, it is true, and I kept out of his way; but the priest is not with him, surely."

“The priest is with him,” answered Dudley;
“and has never left him.”

“Oh! yes he did, yes he did!” replied the peasant; “he was away two whole years, I know. I thought he had gone to do penance, as he would call it, and would never appear in the world again. Had he done so, had he wept in solitude and silence for the whole of his bad career, I might have forgotten it—no, not forgotten it—forgiven, perhaps, but forgot it, never.—He is here, then, here in this county—here in the baronet’s house?”

“I cannot exactly say that,” answered Dudley; “for I do not know, and I would not deceive you on any account; but he was here two years ago—rather more, perhaps, for it was in the autumn; and he then did all he could to injure me, though life or death were at stake.”

“Ay, that is strange,” said Martin Oldkirk.
“Pray, may I ask what is your name, sir, for that is a thing I do not know even yet?”

“My name is Dudley,” replied his companion; “and you may perhaps remember—”

“Why, then, you are the man who was tried and cast for the death of the young lord over the cliffs?” said Martin Oldkirk, interrupting him.

“The same,” answered Dudley. “I was tried and condemned for an act with which I had nothing to do. Of Father Filmer I have seen little or nothing, except when he came to visit me in prison, and tried to convert me to the Roman-catholic faith.”

“Ah! he never lost sight of that,” answered Oldkirk; “but still, what had he to do with you?”

“Why, you shall hear,” answered Dudley; “only let me tell my tale to the conclusion. Do you remember one night when Mr. Adelon came to visit you, and when you gave him a good deal of assistance?”

“Oh, yes! I remember it very well,” answered the man. “I thought, at first, there

was some trick, and I would not say much ; but I soon got sure of my man, and then I was willing enough to do anything I could for him, for I thought of his mother, poor young man. It's a pity I couldn't do more ; but I fancied that Mr. Norries would know how to manage."

" Mr. Norries knew little of the matter till it all transpired long afterwards," replied Dudley ; " but now, as a friend, Mr. Norries wishes me to possess such information as to frustrate the schemes of this Mr. Filmer, and he knew no one better to whom he could send me than yourself."

" I should like to see the letter," said Martin Oldkirk.

" I am afraid that cannot well be," replied Mr. Dudley ; " my baggage, as I told you, is by this time, doubtless, at the bottom of the sea ; but you know Mr. Norries's handwriting, and you cannot doubt that those memoranda were put down by him."

" That's true—that's true," said the man ;

“but still I should like to see the letter. However, don’t let us talk any more of things which are so long gone. I will give you an answer to-morrow, when I have thought over it. In the meantime, I should like very much to hear what the matter was all about two years ago. I recollect the trial very well, and Mr. Adelon coming to me in search of information. I gave him a rudish sort of answer at first; but he was so frank, and so desperate-like, that I could not well refuse; and in the end, I went with him to Norries—but I cannot see how this hypocritical priest had anything to do with that.”

“What object, and what interest he could have, I know not,” answered Dudley, who was a little puzzled with the rambling and desultory manner in which his companion spoke. “All I can tell you is what he actually did, and of that Mr. Adelon says he has no doubt. In the first place, when Edgar went to meet you

the second time, he saw you at the old work-house of a place the name of which I forget. He was followed secretly, by Mr. Filmer's order, by a little boy, who was directed, immediately he discovered the place he entered, to give information to the constable of the hundred, who was already warned to seize Mr. Adelon and any one whom he had with him, on the pretence of his companions having been engaged in the Chartist riots."

"Ay, I broke master constable's head for his pains," said Oldkirk. "Go on, sir."

"He then deceived Mr. Adelon as to the time of my trial," continued Dudley; "and subsequently the same man gave intimation to a blacksmith, named Edward Lane, who could have borne important testimony, that the officers of justice were seeking for him. This priest also persuaded Mr. Clive and his daughter, who could have proved my innocence at once, and who have proved it since, to fly from Eng-

land, and induced a man, named Daniel Connor, to give evidence which approached as near perjury as possible."

"He hated you heartily," said Martin Oldkirk, setting his teeth hard; "and he cannot hate without seeking to destroy."

"For some reason, he certainly does seem to hate me," replied Dudley; "and whether he has power to injure me farther or not, I cannot tell; but at all events, it is the opinion of both Mr. Adelon and myself, that he will try to do so, and that, perhaps, in matters which most deeply affect my welfare. Mr. Norries, with whom I consulted, told me to ask you for some particulars of this priest's previous life, which he thought would open the eyes of Sir Arthur Adelon to the man's real character."

"Puppies are only blind nine days," replied Oldkirk, with a bitter smile. "Sir Arthur Adelon has been blind for twenty years. You will find it a hard matter to open his eyes."

Did his son tell him what the priest had done in your case ?”

“ No,” answered Dudley, “ he did not, on many accounts. For some weeks after my condemnation Edgar was very ill, and then he only arrived at the whole truth by degrees. He proposes now to do so, however, and I wish to strengthen the case against this man by any previous circumstances which may tend to show his false and deceitful character.”

“ Do not tell it to Sir Arthur when alone,” said Oldkirk, musing while he spoke. “ He is too weak to retain a deep impression long ; he may believe a part of what you say at first, but his inclination will be, not to believe, and if his own better judgment and convictions are not backed up by those of others, they will soon fall and be forgotten. I have seen it so myself. As to the rest, I will think over it, sir, and see what can be done. It is many a year since I heard that bitter name, and it has raised feelings in me which I had hoped and thought were

dead. I will try to get quieter before to-morrow. I did not know the viper was so near me, or I might have tried to crush his brains out before now. I knew that Sir Arthur was here a great deal, but him I have never seen but once, and that at a distance. The son I saw many times, for he rode much about the country, and I used to think how much like his poor mother he was, but I never spoke to him till he came that night to see me, for I did not wish to have anything more to do with them."

"Did no one ever tell you that they had a priest with them?" asked Dudley.

"Oh! yes, I heard that," replied Martin Oldkirk; "but there are many priests in Rome, and I knew that this man had been away for a long while after poor Lady Adelon's death; so I never thought it was the same. Did Mr. Norries tell you to ask me for anything more?"

"Yes," replied Dudley; "he said you have charge of certain papers belonging to me."

"They were given me by Norries," replied

Oldkirk; "and I certainly sha'n't give them to any one without his orders."

"Perhaps you are right," replied Dudley; "and to tell you the truth, I care very little about them, for they only serve to prove a fact which I have long known, that strong passions take as inveterate a hold of weak minds as of more powerful minds. They might, indeed, give me some little authority and influence where it may be needful, but that is all."

"Strike at Filmer, strike at Filmer," said Martin Oldkirk, sharply; "and be you sure, sir, that man has nourished in the baronet every evil plant, till it has produced evil fruit. But remember, whatever you do, do it before plenty of witnesses. Take some public room, some crowd, some general meeting, and tax him there with all his wickedness. Unmask him before multitudes, and make him a scoff and a byword for ever. But now, sir, it is late; you must be tired enough, and we shall have many things to talk of to-morrow. It is my

way, when anything moves me a great deal, to lie down and sleep. I sleep like a stone when I am much moved ; and then I get up with my thoughts fresh and clear. I have made you up the best bed I can, and I dare say weariness will be as good as a feather pillow. Wait, I will light you another candle ; I dare say, now, you never sat with a single one before."

" I have sat through long nights with none," replied Dudley. " You forget, my good friend, what it is to be a convict in a penal colony, and cannot know what it is to be an escaped convict in the midst of wilds and deserts which the foot of man has seldom trod ; but such has been my fate."

" I did forget," replied Martin Oldkirk. " You have had a hard lot, sir." And Dudley and he parted for the night.

The sun had been up more than an hour when Dudley woke on the following morning ; and while he dressed himself in the little back room of the cottage where he had slept, he heard

voices in the neighbouring chamber, and could distinguish the words, "I hope the gentleman will remember us well for our trouble, for you see, Martin, the locks aren't broken, and we've not even looked into them."

"I will be answerable for him," replied the voice of Martin Oldkirk. "You may be sure he will pay you well;" and the words were succeeded by a heavy, trailing sound, as if some large object was dragged slowly from one side of the room to another.

When Dudley entered the front chamber, he saw two large boxes standing on the left hand side, to which Martin Oldkirk pointed, with a look of satisfaction, saying, "We've got them out, sir, though we had some trouble, and they seemed pretty well soaked in the sea-water. Now that the tide's out, she stands well nigh high and dry at one part—that's to say, what's left of her, for the masts are all down, and she's broken in two. Another tide, if the wind goes on blowing in this way, wont leave a stick of

her together. A good deal has been got out of her, notwithstanding—one-third of the cargo, I dare say, and most of the passengers' baggage."

"This is, indeed, an important service, Oldkirk," replied Dudley; "and you shall now have Norries's letter; but we must break the chest open, for my keys are lost."

What he proposed was soon effected. The trunks were broken open, the different articles they contained taken out to dry, and the letter which had been so often mentioned was placed in Oldkirk's hands. He took it to the window and read it eagerly, and then exclaimed, "That's a good man, that's a good man, sir! He's the only lawyer that I ever knew who would come forward to help a poor man without fee or reward. He saved me from ruin. The little I have, I owe all to him, and I will do all that he tells me. You shall hear all about it, sir—every word; but first let us have some breakfast."

CHAPTER IX.

THE calm evening light was shining sweetly upon park, and wood, and valley, and high, bare downs: a strong wind blew the fleecy clouds fast across the sky, varying the face of earth with shadows that chased one another like children in their play; and ever and anon the sun was left clear and brilliant, and his rays, poured obliquely from a point hardly two hands-breadth from the horizon, gilded the western sides of the trees, and made their lustrous leaves shine like diamonds. Through the heart of Eda Brandon the shadowy clouds of manifold emotions passed as rapidly as the

vapours over the sky, but still the sun of hope shone forth again, and rendered the little world of her fair bosom as bright and sparkling as the scene around her. He was safe, he was home again, he was near her, he was clear of blame; his innocence was made manifest to the eyes of the whole world. She could look with pride even to his sufferings and to her own love; she could say—He has been injured, traduced, and grieved, but he is innocent, and I have loved him still.

Oh, how joyful was the thought of consoling him through life for all he had undergone; how sweet the expectation of seeing him again, as, leaning on Edgar's arm, she walked quickly across the park towards the old priory; but yet those feelings were sorely agitating. Joy would hold its place, and all seem glad and cheerful for a time; but then, the very intensity of her affection would reach a point which became almost painful, and a sensation

of faintness would come over her, and make her pause and pant for breath.

Edgar felt for her; for although a great change had come over him since first he was presented to the reader; although experience and action, the seasoning fires of youth, had given decision and firmness to his character; although he had grown more powerful in mind, more manly in character, yet not one of the warm enthusiastic feelings of his heart had been lost, and he could understand what it was to feel, with sensations very like those of fear, the meeting with a lover under such circumstances as hers. He soothed her kindly and tenderly, too; he cheered her with every bright subject that fancy could suggest; but he ventured not to laugh or jest, as he might have done at another time; for he saw and knew that the emotions were too deep, the waters of the heart too profound, to be stirred by the light winds in sport. At length, the

limits of the park were reached, and they passed out. He walked quickly through the little wood—though Eda murmured, “Oh, Edgar!” and would fain have paused for a moment—for he thought she would be better, stronger, happier, when the first meeting was over. In a minute more, the grey ruin, and the green ivy, and the little meadow before the sculptured porch, and the stream glancing beyond, were before their eyes, and the form of Dudley, rising up from a pile of architectural fragments, on which he had been sitting, was in Eda’s sight.

There had been many emotions, as I have said, in her breast, as she walked thither; there had been anxiety, and joy, and some degree of apprehension of she knew not what; but the moment that she beheld him, every impression gave way to one—the thought of all he had suffered, and how he had suffered it. It came rushing upon her like a torrent—as one great image—the anguish, the indignation, the priva-

tions, the sorrows, the wrongs he had endured and felt ; and giving way at once to the impulse of the heart, and forgetting all conventional forms, and the cold, thoughtful ceremonies of the world, she sprang forward, she cast herself into his arms, she wept with mingled joy and grief.

There was a long, long pause, for neither of the two could speak, and Edgar would not. The tears rose, too, in Dudley's eyes—not the tears of those weaker emotions which shake the light and the tender, on meeting again with those they love ; but the tears of strong, powerful, soul-subduing gratitude to God for mercies shown, and hope and happiness restored. He thanked, from his very heart, the Almighty Ruler of all destinies, that he had seen his native land again—he thanked him for deliverance from disgrace, and sorrow, and undeserved punishment—he thanked him for a reputation cleared, a high name restored, for honour, and for peace, and for dawning happiness—and perhaps he thanked him more than

all, for giving him the love, the persevering, devoted, unchanging love of one whom he loved so well. It was indeed the crowning blessing of all—that which alone could render life cheerful and pleasant to him; and while, with his arms around her, he pressed her to his heart, and kissed her soft cheek, he felt that of all the blessings prepared for man by the great Creator in the terrestrial paradise, there was no blessing equal to the last, which was bestowed for the comfort and consolation needed by man even in Eden.

At length their feelings found voice; and seating themselves upon the same shaded pile of chiselled stone-work where Dudley had waited the coming of Eda and her cousin, they began to talk over the past and the future. Of the past the reader knows so much, that he need not listen to their conversation here. Nor did Dudley dwell upon it long, for he knew that their time was short, and that

Eda must speedily return to mingle once more with gay scenes, in which she took no interested part; but turning quickly to the more important present, on which so much depended, he besought Eda not to say to any one that she had seen him, nor to give a hint that he had returned to the land.

“There are many things, dearest Eda,” he said, “which I wish to do before I openly avow myself. I must, in the first place, claim back my property from the crown, and take measures to make my restitution to all my rights, and the restoration of honour to my name as clear and perfect as possible; and for these purposes I must see Mr. Clive. But I am told he is absent. Do you think he will soon return?”

“Not till the end of the week, they told me at the Grange, Dudley,” answered Miss Brandon; “but I can easily get his address.”

“Are you quite sure, dear Eda,” asked Dudley, “that he has not told the facts con-

cerning the death of Lord Hadley to other and less discreet persons than yourself—especially, to Mr. Filmer?”

“Certainly not, unless by letter,” replied Eda; “for both Mr. Clive and Helen were away when we arrived. I have asked at many of the cottages of the peasantry in regard to the cause of his long absence, but do not find that any one entertains the slightest suspicion of what it seems, from Edgar’s account, has taken place in London, and I am quite sure that neither my uncle nor Mr. Filmer have the slightest knowledge of the changed circumstances in which we stand. I think it might be better,” she added, and then paused and hesitated, with a beautiful blush rising up and tinging her cheek and temples, “I think it might be better—why should I scruple to say so?—to come up to Brandon and claim me for your own at once. There are several persons there, some of them entertaining expectations, I believe with my uncle’s encouragement, which can

never be fulfilled; and I would fain have it known at once, Dudley, that my hand is promised to another, and that there is nothing which has been able to shake my esteem for a man whose conduct in trifles only gave me, in early years, the clearest indication of what would be his conduct in more important, though more painful, scenes at an after period."

Dudley pressed his lips upon her hand. "Dear Eda," he said, "the temptation is a great one; but let us think well what we are doing. Your uncle, I believe, knows not—has, in fact, no suspicion—that my innocence is proved, and my pardon granted."

"None, none whatever," answered Eda. "During several months, while we were wandering hither and thither, he only saw the newspapers at intervals, and I know not whether the case was ever stated in them at all."

"It was hinted at in one of the evening prints," said Edgar Adelon; "but the whole transaction was conducted privately—without

any affectation of secrecy, indeed—but in a quiet, unostentatious manner; and the Secretary of State thought, when all was decided, that it would be better to take no public notice of the transaction till your return, Dudley; when, as he said, you could yourself have recourse to such means as you might judge advisable.”

Dudley had fallen into a reverie while Edgar was speaking, but he roused himself immediately, saying, in the same low tone which they had hitherto employed—for the impression of their secret meeting affected even their conversation, while no one could hear—“Perhaps it might be better, as you say, Eda; but if I determine upon following this course, prepare yourself, love, for somewhat strange and perhaps unpleasant scenes. Your uncle will, of course, imagine at first that I am an escaped convict. He will be indignant at my showing myself in his house at all, still more indignant at what he will consider my rash pretensions. He may carry this indignation to violent mea-

tures and harsh terms ; and if you yourself are present, it may place you in unpleasant circumstances.”

“ I fear not,” answered Eda, “ the whole will be easily explained ; and although he will, doubtless, still object, and I might be most unwilling, in matters not affecting my whole happiness and welfare, to reject the counsel of one who has been a father to me, yet in this case, Dudley, no objections will be of any avail. I have scrutinized my own heart—I know and understand my own feelings, and I am ready to choose my part at once, and to act up to it to the end.”

“ But the question is this,” said Dudley. “ Can you do so, my Eda, if I think fit, on motives of my own, to give no explanations to your uncle, or any one who may be present—to let mistakes go on, and confusion work itself clear by gradual and natural means ?”

“ But upon what motives, Dudley ?” asked Eda, in a tone of anxiety. “ Why should you

suffer mistakes to exist, when there is an easy way of explaining them ?”

“Not for the purpose, believe me, dear girl,” replied Dudley, “of showing how strong is the force of your attachment, and inducing you to avow your unshaken affection even for a condemned convict; neither with a view to let your uncle commit himself by injustice towards me; but to open his eyes, perhaps, to the conduct of a villain and a hypocrite who has long deceived him. The course I propose seems to me to be the best adapted to that object; but I will think over it, Eda, till to-morrow morning. Could not you and Edgar stroll down here together on an early walk an hour or two before breakfast ?”

“Assuredly,” answered Edgar, speaking for his cousin. “All our guests are sad lie-a-beds, and will be in no condition to interrupt us, except our good friend, Captain M——, and of him we can easily dispose.”

“Well, I will think of it to-night,” replied

Dudley. "I should have liked to see Clive first, indeed; but I think as he is absent we must not wait his coming. Only remember not to give any explanation till I judge right to do so myself. I think Eda will not disavow her love under any circumstances?"

"Assuredly," answered Eda; "but one of our servants said to-day, that there was some expectation entertained of the return of Mr. Clive and Helen to-morrow—tidings which have kept Edgar's heart beating all the day;" and she gazed at her cousin with a gay smile.

"I shall be able to tell you more when we meet, Dudley," said Edgar; "and to say the truth, I think your plan the very best you could have formed; for whether Mr. Clive is here or not, I shall be able to prove all the facts, having a copy of the depositions."

"There are more facts than you know, Edgar," answered Dudley, in a somewhat stern tone; and Eda started at the words, and drew

a little aside, saying, "Speak with me for a moment, Dudley—you would not, I am sure," she continued, in a low voice, "do anything to injure my uncle. You may have obtained those papers of which we once heard much mention; but I think—nay, I am sure—that you would not use them to his detriment."

"Pain him, I must, Eda," replied Dudley; "injure him I will not in the least degree, and even the pain shall turn to his benefit—ay, and to his peace; for with all his prosperity he has not been a happy man. But the sun is down, dear one, and I must not keep you longer, for it will be quite dark ere you reach the house."

Thus saying, he led her back to where Edgar stood, and bade them adieu, adding, as they parted, in a louder tone than they had hitherto used, "Then I shall see you here to-morrow, about eight, and we will decide upon our future course."

Edgar and Eda assured him they would not fail, and took their way back through the little

wood. Dudley gazed after them till they were hidden by the young green boughs, and then walked slowly away in the direction of the small place called Beach Rock.

For some minutes after he was gone, all was still and silent. The rosy beams of the evening departed from the light clouds overhead; the nightingale broke forth in the wood; the scene around lost its lustre and became grey; and the bat, more surely summer's harbinger even than the martin, flitted quietly over the space before the old building, in search of its insect prey. At the end of those few minutes, however, some of the branches of ivy, which had extended themselves across the ruined doorway, were pushed back, and a dark shadowy figure came out in the grey twilight, and stood for a moment with the arms crossed upon the chest. It was that of a man, dressed in a long straight-cut black coat, with a white cravat tied round the throat. There was nothing else remarkable in his appearance, and he gazed

quietly to the left, upon the road taken by Eda and Edgar, and then to the right, where Dudley had disappeared. He next fell into a fit of meditation, the nature of which it would be difficult to divine. It ended, however, with a low, unpleasant laugh, and saying to himself, "So, so!—at eight o'clock to-morrow," he turned and walked away in the same direction as Miss Brandon and her cousin, but took the road under the park wall for some way, and entered the enclosure by a stile farther up.

CHAPTER X.

It still wanted half an hour of eight o'clock on the following morning, when Dudley walked along the road from Beach Rock to Brandon. He was not alone, however, for by his side was Martin Oldkirk, whose stern but not unpleasant features were lighted up with an expression of high satisfaction. At the distance of about a quarter of a mile from the old Priory the two paused, and Dudley turned to take the path across the fields which led to the ruin, while Martin Oldkirk went on; but after a moment the young gentleman paused and called to

his companion, saying, "I think you would do it more quickly if you would go back and get the gig we left at Seafield. I should like to have them all at Brandon by half-past nine.

"I shall go quicker on foot, sir," replied Oldkirk. "Seafield is a mile and a half, and that would be all lost time."

Without more words he walked on; and leaping the stile with a light heart, Dudley soon reached the bank of the little stream near which ran the path he was following. Slackening his pace a little, as he proceeded, to gaze at the dancing waters sparkling in the morning light, he advanced, with the copse straight before him, and an angle of the ruin rising grey above the green foliage. The hour and the scene and the season all harmonized well with the feelings in his bosom. He was going to meet her he loved in the bright morning of the year's most hopeful time, and his heart was full of the thrilling emotions of life's happiest dream.

He reached the little lawn which spread from the old portal to the brink of the stream, and, knowing he was before the hour, was advancing to take the seat which he had chosen the night before, and wait with hope and fancy for his companions, when a man came forth from one of the recesses of the building, with a slow and sauntering air.

“This is disagreeable!” thought Dudley; “but it matters not. As I have resolved on my course, I will walk on. I shall be sure to meet them in the park;” and he began to cross the green towards the copse, when the man whom he had seen, called to him, saying, “Sir, sir! I want to ask you a question.”

Dudley instantly paused and turned round, when at the same moment another man appeared, and the first approaching said, “Is not your name Dudley, sir?”

“Yes,” replied the young gentleman; “what may be your pleasure with me?”

“I apprehend you in the Queen’s name,”

said the stranger, grasping his arm and producing a constable's staff; "go along with me."

"Where is your warrant?" demanded Dudley, with perfect calmness, while the second man approached.

"I don't need any warrants," answered the constable. "I know you for a returned convict; and I shall take you at once before Mr. Conway."

"No, that you shall not do," replied Dudley, keeping them at a little distance. "It is your duty to take me before the nearest magistrate; that is Sir Arthur Adelon, and you have no pretence for making me go four miles when there is a Justice within one."

"Well, there can be no objection to that," said the constable; but the other man interposed, observing in a low tone, "He said before Mr. Conway."

"I don't care for that," replied the other; "I don't take my orders from he.—Did he say why?"

“I have told you what is your duty,” said Dudley; “and you know it to be so. Disregard it at your peril; for you will find in a very short time that you are altogether wrong in this business; and if you subject me to more inconvenience than necessary, I will certainly punish you.”

“Well, I shall put the handcuffs on you, at all events, my young blade,” replied the constable; “that I have a right to do.”

“No you have not,” answered Dudley, who had a stout stick in his hand; “and you shall not do it. I tell you I am not an escaped convict, and that I am ready to go before Sir Arthur Adelon, without the slightest resistance; but any attempt to treat me with indignity I will resist to the utmost of my power, knowing that I am in the right. The consequences, then, be upon your own heads; for whether I be injured or you be injured, in any struggle which may take place, the responsibility will rest with you.”

It is unfortunate that the inferior officers of the law have seldom any accurate knowledge of the law they have to execute, which generally makes their proceedings either rashly violent or weakly hesitating. "Well, sir," said the constable in return, after a moment's thought, "if you will go quietly, I don't mind."

"I will go quite quietly," replied Dudley, "and for your own satisfaction, one can come on one side and the other on the other; but remember, if either of you attempt to touch me, I will knock him down."

This being arranged, the whole party proceeded with some caution through the little wood, across the road, and into the park. They had hardly gone a hundred yards, however, when Dudley perceived those whom he had come to meet, advancing towards him. He took not the least notice, but proceeded with a calm and deliberate step; and he could see that Edgar suddenly hurried his pace.

When they came a little nearer, Sir Arthur

Adelon's son left his cousin beneath one of the chestnut trees, and hastening forward, shook Dudley warmly by the hand. The two constables looked at each other in some surprise, for this was a sort of recognition which they had not the least expectation of witnessing; and they made no effort to interrupt a low conversation which went on for a minute or two between their prisoner and his friend.

"I will tell him—I will not fail to tell him," said Edgar. "I will get back with Eda as fast as possible, that she may be there before you arrive. Good-bye, good-bye, for the present."

Thus ended their short conference; and Dudley, turning to the constables, told them he was ready to proceed. It was evident, the two men began to doubt that they were exactly in the right; but Dudley gave them no opportunity of satisfying themselves any farther, walking on with a slow step, and suffering Eda and her cousin to enter the house before him. Few of the servants were seen about the place; and

the man who appeared at the hall-door, in answer to the summons of the bell, was a stranger to Dudley.

A small room in Brandon House had been set apart as a justice-room; but when the servant led the constables and their prisoner thither, he found the door locked, and consequently conducted them into the library.

"Sir Arthur is not down yet," said the footman, "but I will tell him as soon as he is up."

"Tell Mr. Filmer," said the constable; "he's up, I'll warrant."

Dudley listened with a slight smile, but made no remark aloud, thinking, though mistakenly, "Some of the servants saw me on the night of the wreck, and have told the priest."

After waiting for a few minutes, the same servant returned, and beckoned one of the constables out of the room. He was absent for nearly a quarter of an hour; but on his return he advanced towards Dudley, saying, "I am to take you to Mr. Conway, sir," for Sir Arthur

will not like to deal with the case, because he knows you."

"I am afraid he must," replied Dudley, firmly. "I am here in a magistrate's house, and I certainly shall not quit it till he has decided whether there is, or is not, cause for keeping me in custody. You need not speak another word upon the subject, my good friend, for here I am determined to remain."

The man seemed puzzled, and gave a significant look towards his companion. He then quitted the room once more, but returning after an absence of a few minutes, sat down at a little distance from the prisoner, and beat the top of his hat with his fingers. Many persons were now heard moving about the house, and a round-headed, fat-faced, young man, in a Melton coat, top-boots, and white-cord breeches, entered, looked round, and walked out again. Some one also passed along under the windows, whistling one of those interminable airs which ornament modern operas, and which are

so happily adapted to vulgar tastes, that everybody can whistle them, and everybody does. A moment after, Sir Arthur's voice was heard in the hall, saying, apparently to a servant, "Well, ring the breakfast bell, I dare say we shall not be long. Do you know what it is about? Who is he?"

"He looks quite like a gentleman, sir," said the servant; "but I did not ask any questions. Mr. Filmer has spoken with the constables."

"Well, send Mr. Filmer to me," said Sir Arthur Adelon. "Good morning, my lord; good morning, Captain M——. The constables have brought in a prisoner; I must go and see what it is all about; but I will join you at breakfast in a few minutes."

"Yours is an open court, I suppose, Sir Arthur," said the voice of Captain M——; "and if you will permit me; I will see how people conduct such business here."

"Certainly, certainly," said Sir Arthur Adelon; and opening the door of the library

he walked in, followed by Lord Kingsland and Captain M——.

The moment the baronet's eyes fell upon Dudley, however, a change came over his face. He turned very pale, and his lip quivered; but he recovered speedily, and noticing the prisoner with a haughty bow, he said, "I did not expect to see you here, sir." At the same time, he moved towards a great arm-chair, by the side of the library table. Captain M——'s eye glanced towards Dudley with a very slight smile, but he took no farther notice of him, and seated himself near the peer and the baronet.

"I dare say you did not, Sir Arthur," said Dudley, in reply to the magistrate's words. "My coming hither, at this moment, was unexpected to myself, though I certainly should have troubled you with a visit in a short time. It is to these two worthy gentlemen I owe the pleasure of seeing you sooner than I intended."

“Humph!” said Sir Arthur, with a cold look. “I am to suppose, sir, then, that they brought you hither—in which they probably only did their duty? Upon what charge have you brought this—this—this gentleman, before me,” he continued, addressing the constable.

“Why, your worship, Sir Arthur,” replied the man, “I had information that this gentleman—this Mr. Dudley—is an escaped convict, the same as he who was condemned at the assizes two or three years ago. If he’s not, he’s very like him.”

“What do you say to this charge, sir,” demanded Sir Arthur Adelon, looking at Dudley with the same cold demeanour.

“By your permission, Sir Arthur,” replied Dudley, “I will put one question to this good man.”

“Oh! as many as you please,” answered the baronet, throwing himself back in his chair, evidently not very much at ease.

“Well then, tell me, my good friend the

constable," continued Dudley, "who was it that gave you orders to apprehend me?"

"Why, nobody gave me no orders like," replied the constable; "but I had information like."

"From whom?" demanded Dudley. "That is exactly what I want to know."

The man looked a little bewildered, but at length replied, "Why, I was told not to say anything about it."

"Yes; but you must say something here," said Dudley. "I insist upon your informing Sir Arthur Adelon, who it was that gave you that information."

"Why, it was Mr. Filmer—Father Peter, as they call him, if I must say," replied the constable. "I don't see why he should mind my telling."

"I doubt its being very pleasing to him," replied Dudley; "but with that we have nothing to do."

"I do not see what we have to do with the

matter at all," said Sir Arthur Adelon. "To me it seems of no importance."

"To you it is of the greatest importance in the world," replied Dudley. "I put the question for the express purpose of leading to the complete display of a villain's character. I must request you to send for Mr. Filmer, sir."

"I have sent for him already," said Sir Arthur, sharply; "but the question is, whether you, sir, are an escaped convict or not, and with that Mr. Filmer has nothing to do."

"That is not the whole question," replied Dudley. "When that is all made clear, it will remain to be seen whether these men have acted properly in taking me into custody without a warrant, and without information on oath. I might also add, that they sought, in the first instance—doubtless by the advice of the same worthy informer—to take me four miles hence, to Mr. Conway, when they apprehended me on the very grounds of Brandon."

‘ That was wrong,” said Sir Arthur. “ Pray, who told you to do that, constable ?”

“ Why, Mr. Filmer, sir,” answered the man.

“ Ah ! here he comes to answer for himself,” observed the baronet as the door opened ; but instead of Mr. Filmer, it was the baronet’s son who appeared, and, walking straight up to Dudley, he shook hands with him warmly.

Sir Arthur eyed him for a moment with a look of displeasure, and perhaps would have fain closed the doors of the library against any farther audience ; but he felt that there were many circumstances which might render such a step injudicious ; and turning to one of the constables, he said, in a hurried manner, “ Send for Mr. Filmer again ; say I desire to speak with him. Pray be seated, Mr. Dudley,” he continued, in a more courteous tone than he had hitherto used. “ I could certainly have wished that this case had been brought before Mr. Conway, or any other magistrate, rather than

myself; for the feelings of friendship which I have always entertained towards you, may throw a suspicion of partiality over my proceedings. But I shall try to avoid the reality as far as possible, and deal with the matter in hand according to the principles of justice and common sense."

Dudley felt a little indignant at this speech, well understanding the quality of the friendship which Sir Arthur expressed towards him; but a portion of contempt mingled with his indignation, for he was aware that hypocrisy has its origin in weakness more frequently than in art. Cunning is the refuge of the feeble. He sat down, therefore, in silence, merely bowing his head; and the moment after Mr. Filmer entered the room.

Whether he had obtained any hint of what was occurring, or whether shrewd perception supplied the place of information, I know not; but his course was evidently chosen from the moment he entered the room. His step was,

as usual, calm and easy, silent, but firm ; and turning a cold, stern glance upon Dudley, he advanced to the table where Sir Arthur Adelon sat, and said at once, without giving any one time to explain, "I am very happy, Sir Arthur, to see that the constables have done their duty upon the information which I afforded them last night, although I perceive they have not attended to my warning, nor carried before Mr. Conway a case upon which I knew it would be very painful for you to decide."

As he spoke, his eyes again turned towards Dudley for a moment, and he saw an expression upon that gentleman's face which did not satisfy him. It was an expression of tranquil, almost contemptuous calmness. Dudley seemed rather amused than not ; but if the priest was not well pleased with the look of the prisoner, he was still less so with a word that sounded close in his ear. "Hypocrite !" said a low voice, and turning round, he saw Edgar Adelon close beside him.

“Did you apply that term to me, my son?” said Mr. Filmer, almost in a whisper.

With a stern, contracted brow, the young man slowly bent his head in sign of affirmation, and then withdrew a step, leaving him alone.

“Pray, Mr. Filmer,” said Dudley, rising, “though the question may appear a little irregular, and not bearing on the points at issue, may I ask how you obtained certain information of my return to this country, so as—without making oath, or taking out a warrant against me—to send constables to apprehend me?”

“The question *is* irregular,” said the priest, sternly; but the moment after, a gleam of bitter satisfaction came into his eyes, and he added, “I can tell you if you desire it, nevertheless; but if you will take my advice you will not inquire;” and he looked round to Edgar Adelon with one of his serpent sneers, which seemed but the more intense from the assumed mildness and tranquillity of every feature but the

lip. Edgar at once quitted the room, but Dudley replied—

“Sir, having nothing whatsoever to fear, I will beg you to give the information I desired.”

Mr. Filmer seemed to hesitate for a moment, and turned a look towards Sir Arthur Adelon, who answered it by saying, “Pray do ; this matter must be investigated to the bottom.”

“Be it so, then,” said Mr. Filmer. “Yesterday evening I chanced, as is frequently my custom, to wander forth to the old Priory, wishing—as who might not wish—to spend a short time in meditation, perhaps in prayer, upon the spot, and amidst the scenes where holy men—ay, and martyrs, too—have trod the earth with their feet, and watered it with their blood, and addressed their petitions to Heaven. I was sitting, lost in thought, when I heard voices near, and looking forth I saw a party, consisting of two gentlemen and a lady. Shall I give their names ?” he continued ; and he fixed his eyes firmly upon Dudley.

“Decidedly,” replied the prisoner ; although perhaps, to say the truth, he was not quite well pleased at the idea of his conversation with Eda having been overheard.

“Certainly, certainly,” replied Lord Kingsland, who seemed for the moment to have the parliamentary spirit strong upon him. “Name, name !”

“Pray give them,” said Sir Arthur Adelon, although his feelings were not very comfortable.

“One gentleman was Mr. Dudley,” replied the priest, slowly ; “the other was your son, Sir Arthur ; the lady’s name perhaps I had better not mention.”

“She will name it herself,” said Eda Brandon, entering the room, leaning upon Edgar’s arm. “I was the person, my dear uncle, who was with Edgar and Mr. Dudley at the Priory ; and I was exceedingly glad,” she continued, crossing over to Dudley and giving him her hand, “to congratulate him on his safe return to England.”

Dudley retained the fair, small hand she offered, in his own for a moment or two; and there they stood together, she with her colour a good deal heightened, and he with his eyes full of bright and proud satisfaction. It had required a great effort; but all that she had said was calm and lady-like, and nothing more. She had made no avowal of attachment; she had tried to banish the tone, the look, the manner of affection; but those who were around and marked the blush upon her cheek, the light in Dudley's eyes, doubted not for one instant the spring of love, from the depths of which those bright bubbles rose to the surface.

Sir Arthur Adelon looked utterly confounded; and Eda, seeing, with some embarrassment, that all eyes were fixed upon her, said, in a somewhat faltering tone, but which grew stronger and firmer as she went on, "I am afraid, my dear uncle, that I have intruded where I have little business; but Edgar having told me, in his enthusiastic way, that Mr.

Filmer was likely to make a mystery of that in which there is really none, I came to sweep all such things away; for there is nothing that I should more dislike, than any of my actions being made a secret of. When all this is over, Mr. Dudley," she continued, turning towards him, "I shall be most happy to welcome you to Brandon—indeed, breakfast is already waiting;" and she was retiring from the room, when her uncle exclaimed, "Stay, Eda, stay! All this is most extraordinary! Pray, then, did you know that this gentleman had returned?"

"Perfectly," answered Eda. "I was aware that he had come back in the same ship with Edgar, and that he had suffered shipwreck with him, after having endured two years of undeserved hardship, brought upon him by the basest machinations of a designing man."

She would not look at Filmer while she spoke, for the strong, earnest love of her heart, had raised the spirit of indignation in her,

which she feared might appear too clearly ; and turning away she quitted the library.

“ What is the meaning of all this ? ” asked Sir Arthur Adelon, looking at his son. “ There seems to be a serious accusation against some one, but what it is I cannot divine.”

“ It is, I believe, a very common case, Sir Arthur,” answered Mr. Filmer ; “ ingratitude to those who have served and benefited us ; suspicion of those who have dealt honestly for our good against our inclination ; and slander of the innocent in order to shield the guilty ; but the simple question before you, I believe, is, without considering any idle attack upon me, or defence equally idle, whether that person standing there is or is not an offender, under the sentence of the law, escaped from the country and the punishment to which the law assigned him.”

“ I can answer that question at once,” said Captain M—— ; “ and you must forgive me for speaking, notwithstanding your message,

my dear Dudley. I first knew that gentleman, Sir Arthur, in the quality of the Nameless fisherman by the nameless lake. I afterwards had the pleasure of seeing him at the Government House, at Hobart Town, with his character cleared from all stain, and his name and honour as bright and proud as that of any gentleman in the land. I can testify that he received a pardon under the great seal, in consequence of being clearly proved innocent of an offence for which he had been wrongly condemned."

"Then I have no farther business here," said Mr. Filmer, with perfect tranquillity of tone and look. "I could not be aware of the circumstances under which Mr. Dudley had returned; and I suppose that no one will deny I acted properly, in pointing out to the officers of justice a person whom I believed to have escaped from the due punishment of a great offence."

"Stay one moment," said Dudley, "I have

not yet done with you, sir. I have a charge to make against you, and a very heavy one."

Mr. Filmer's face might turn a shade or two paler; for it is a difficult thing, when, through a long life, one has been acting a deep and criminal part, to see even the chance of exposure, and yet so rule the heart, that the blood will not fly back to it in alarm. Habitual success may do something; the confidence of tried skill and known power may do something likewise; and the custom of concealing emotion may still rule words, and tones, and actions, and even looks; but that subtle thing, whatever it is, which sometimes sends the warm stream of life rushing in an instant through every vein to the face, and at others, calls it suddenly back to the deep well of the heart, cannot be so commanded. The vagueness of a charge, too, does greatly add to its terrifying influence upon one who has been a hypocrite from the beginning. All his powers of mind, be

they what they may, are but as a small garrison in a ruined fortress, attacked by a large army. Every evil act that he has committed, every false word that he has spoken, has made a breach in his own walls of defence. He knows not at what feeble and unguarded point he may be attacked, for he has himself raised up an innumerable host to assail him ; his own crimes are his own enemies, and in proportion to their multitude must be his fears.

Mr. Filmer did turn somewhat paler than he was before ; but so calm was his whole aspect, that no one marked the change but Dudley and Edgar Adelon, whose keen eyes were fixed upon his face the whole time.

“ Well, sir,” he said, turning towards his accuser, “ I shall be very ready to hear and answer the charge, as I know it must be groundless ; but will you allow me to suggest that it should be made at a later hour of the day. You are aware that I am an early riser,

and I have not yet broken my fast. My appetite, too, is good, considering my years."

"It seems, sir, that you wished to increase mine by a walk of four miles," replied Dudley; "but this matter is serious, and cannot be turned off lightly. I will make the charge whenever Sir Arthur Adelon thinks fit to receive it; but I do not lose sight of you till it is made."

"Then am I to consider it is of a criminal nature, and cognizable by a magistrate?" demanded the baronet, very much discomposed.

"Such as must lead you, if it be even in part established," replied Dudley, "to commit this person to prison, or, at all events, to require bail for his appearance."

"Then I would much prefer that the charge should be made before another magistrate," said Sir Arthur; but Dudley, Edgar, and the priest himself, interfered, the two former somewhat eagerly, and the latter with the slightly sar-

castie tone which marked his replies when he was not well pleased.

“As my accuser has no objection, Sir Arthur,” he said, “I must add my voice to his. I at least do not suspect you of partiality; but the great question with me at present is breakfast. I know you have not yet taken any yourself, my kind friend; and although I do not bear any ill will to Mr. Dudley on account of whatever accusations he may bring against me, either for pastime or revenge, I certainly shall be very angry with him if he interrupts our pleasant morning meal, which was always, I must say, a very tranquil one till he first set his foot in this house.”

“That is true, at least,” said Sir Arthur, in a low tone. But Edgar interfered again, observing, “You had better, perhaps, join Eda in the breakfast-room, my dear father. Dudley, she will be happy, as you heard, to see you there; and after the meal we can proceed with this unfortunate business.”

“An exceedingly good motion, and one for which I shall certainly vote!” exclaimed Lord Kingsland, rising. And then, turning to Captain M——, he added, in a low voice, “I think, M——, if we ever intended, in the private theatricals of Brandon, to perform the Rivals, we may spare ourselves the trouble!”

“I had no part in the cast,” replied Captain M——, “though I am very sure, my good lord, there are more private theatricals going on in every house in the land than we generally imagine.”

“Ever moralizing!—ever moralizing!” said the peer, with an air of easy persiflage. And he took his way to the breakfast-room, followed by the rest of the party.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE was a certain degree of agitation upon Eda's beautiful face, when the party from the library entered the room where she sat; but that agitation did not take one particle from the grace of her demeanour; and in a few minutes all were seated round the table. As usual, where there is a great deal of vanity, there was a certain portion of spite in Lord Kingsland's nature; and on the present occasion it did not sleep. He was mortified at losing the hand of the heiress of Brandon, and he took care to make the person who was likely to cause that loss feel all that was painful in

his position to the utmost—not, indeed, that he ever dreamed that Eda would give, or that Sir Arthur would suffer her to give, her hand to one who had been a convict; that was a thing quite out of the question, in his opinion. It might be supposed, therefore, that he would not easily be led to give up the pursuit in which he had engaged, as a marriage with the heiress had always been looked upon by him merely as a matter of convenience; but in every man's mind there is some peculiar prejudice of that sort commonly called crotchet, generally proceeding from vanity, and in his case decidedly so. He thought Eda Brandon exceedingly beautiful; but still he had not husbanded the fine feelings of the heart so carefully as to be capable of love. Nevertheless, Lord Kingsland would on no account have married a woman who had loved another. He did not like that any man on earth should be able to say of his wife, "She was once engaged to me;"

and how much less would he have liked it to be said that Lady Kingsland had been in love with *a convict*!

As that could not be, the only consolation he could find under his little disappointment was to make Eda and Dudley feel that the latter had been a convict, and would ever by his fellow-men be regarded as a convict. He became exceedingly curious, on a sudden, about Van Dieman's Land, asked innumerable questions in regard to Hobart Town, and even ventured upon Norfolk Island. Convict discipline became a matter of great interest to him; and to hear him speak upon the subject—of which he knew nothing—one would have thought that he was a great philanthropical legislator.

Dudley answered his questions with calm gravity; but yet he could not help feeling, with painful acuteness, that the world, the bitter, slanderous world, had got its fangs in his flesh, with a hold that nothing could shake off—that

a stain had been placed upon his name most unjustly, which, though it might be erased, would still leave a trace behind.

With the sharp and clear perception of woman, Eda understood the motives in which the peer's conduct originated, and felt both contempt and anger. The only effect which it produced upon her own conduct, however, was to make her demeanour to Dudley more marked and tender. Eda Brandon never flirted in her life, and there was something very distinct from anything of that sort in her behaviour on the present occasion; but she felt that it was due to Dudley, when she saw him so unfairly annoyed, to take her stand, as it were, by his side, and to let her affection for him be perfectly undisguised.

The other gentlemen who were in the room, and who had not been present at the scene which had taken place in the library, seemed amazingly puzzled at all they now witnessed. In addition to everything else, Sir Arthur Adelon was evidently ill at ease, and

Edgar was stern, silent, and almost sharp in his replies when forced to speak.

Mr. Filmer was the only one who maintained his usual placid demeanour, and he did that perfectly ; for, alas ! it is a very fatal error to believe that the external appearance of calm tranquillity is always an indication of a heart at peace with itself. The priest made a fuller breakfast than usual, conversed agreeably with those around him, and gave no indication of having any cause for anxiety or even deep thought within. Before the meal was fully over, however, a servant came in and announced that Mr. Clive and his daughter were there ; and Dudley could perceive that Filmer's face turned deadly pale.

"Show them in," said Sir Arthur. "I am very glad they have returned."

"Who is Mr. Clive?" asked the young baronet, whom I have mentioned once before, and while Sir Arthur was answering, "Oh, he is a gentleman of very old family, but of some-

what reduced circumstances," the priest arose quietly, and saying, in a low tone, "I am glad they have come, too; I want much to speak with Clive for a few minutes," moved, with his usual noiseless step, towards the door.

But Edgar Adelon suddenly sprang up from the table, and placed himself in the way. "That cannot be suffered," he exclaimed. "You must remain here, sir."

"You! This from you, Edgar!" exclaimed Mr. Filmer, drawing back with an air of astonishment, if not really felt, certainly well assumed.

"Yes!" answered Edgar, "and more too; for where I once esteemed——"

What he was about to add was stopped by the entrance of Mr. Clive and Helen, who sprang forward to Eda Brandon, as to a sister. Sir Arthur greeted Mr. Clive himself, with his usual kind, but somewhat stately air; and Mr. Filmer approached with a degree of eagerness which in him betokened no slight agitation, as

if to welcome Mr. Clive, holding out his hand to him at the same time. But Clive drew back, and looking sternly at the priest, said, "Excuse me, sir; there are matters which require explanation before I can either look upon you as my friend, or listen to you as my pastor."

"What can be the meaning of all this?" exclaimed Sir Arthur Adelon. "Explain, Clive—I am in the dark."

"Ay, let him explain," answered Mr. Filmer, setting his teeth tight; "I can give a sufficient account of my own conduct and my own motives, and do not fear any explanations." But his clouded brow and unwonted manner showed that there was something which he had wished concealed, but which could be no longer hidden.

"If you wish it, sir, my conduct can all be easily explained," said Clive; and then, turning towards Sir Arthur, he was going on, when his eyes suddenly fell upon Dudley, and advancing towards him, he took his hand in his own, and

pressed it, with a grave look, saying, "Mr. Dudley, I am delighted to see you back in your own country again, and free from all stain or reproach. Believe me, had I known that a false charge had been brought against you—had it not been studiously concealed from me by the most artful and the most infamous means, you should not have laboured for one hour under an imputation from which I can free you. This I am sure you know, and you now know also who it was that did the deed for which you have suffered so severely; but what you do not know, perhaps, is, the man whom you see there standing before you, urged me to fly, knowing that the act was mine, and the very same night contrived means to turn the charge against you."

Mr. Filmer took a step towards them where they stood, and exclaimed, with a solemn and impressive air, "Clive, Clive, my friend! You are suffering a generous nature to betray you into most ungenerous acts. I wish those words

had been spoken by heretical lips, rather than yours. Have you no respect for the religion you profess, or for its ministers, that when one of them did you an act of great kindness, you should use it as a charge against him? Tell me, did I not, the moment I knew what you had done—did I not, I say, come down, at a late hour of the night, to comfort and counsel you? I did advise you to fly—I acknowledge it; but it was in consideration of your own safety that I did so; for let me tell you, my son, that even in this land, which boasts so much of its equity and its justice, it is no slight thing to kill a peer of the realm. As soon as I was told who it was that had done it, I went down for the sole purpose of advising you to fly, as the only means of saving you from detection and punishment.”

“ May I ask you, sir,” said Dudley, “ as this seems to be an explanation rather than an examination, who was the man from whom you derived your information?”

“ You are very ignorant, sir, it would appear,” replied Filmer, with an air of reproof, “ of the rules and principles of a church of which you are accustomed to express contempt and abhorrence, otherwise you would know that a priest does not break the seal of confession. To give you, or any one else, the name, would be a violation of that important law.”

“ And did you really know who it was that killed Lord Hadley?” demanded Sir Arthur Adelon, in a tone of surprise.

“ I did, sir.—What then ?” replied Mr. Filmer, with a stern look, laying a somewhat menacing emphasis upon the words.

“ Nay, nothing,” replied Sir Arthur Adelon; but Dudley went on, sternly saying, “ It is unnecessary, Mr. Filmer, to violate the seal of confession, for we know the name of your informant already, and in this deposition you will find all the facts. I am inclined to imagine that Daniel Connor is even now in this house, but

if you will examine that paper, you will see that he has already deposed to his having told you the whole truth, and to your having come down to him afterwards, to induce him to put his evidence in such a shape as to bring the charge upon me rather than upon Mr. Clive. Now, Sir Arthur Adelon, this is something like a subornation of witnesses, and it can be proved by the man's own statement."

"You are labouring under a mistake, young gentleman," said Filmer, now driven to bay. "For his own sake and his safety I certainly did recommend to Daniel Connor to go up and give his evidence spontaneously, in order that no suspicion should attach to himself. He said, if I recollect rightly, that the man who had done the deed was very much of the same height as yourself, but when he swore that, he swore truly."

"Doubtless," replied Dudley; "but he states that he could have told exactly who did it, and

would have told, if it had not been for your persuasions to the contrary."

"This seems a very bad case," said Lord Kingsland, speaking to Edgar Adelon. "If the animus can be proved, it will assume a serious complexion."

Without replying directly to the peer, Edgar stepped forward, and addressing Mr. Filmer, demanded, "Did you, or did you not, sir, when you knew that I was seeking for evidence, and had nearly obtained it, to show before a jury the impossibility of Mr. Dudley having committed the offence with which he was charged—did you not cause me to be watched, followed, and apprehended, after a struggle, in which my life was nearly endangered; and did you not afterwards deceive me grossly as to the time when the trial was to be brought on, and take every means of preventing me from accomplishing the end I had in view? Now, sir, you cannot deny it, and if you can, I will convict

you by the testimony of your own spy. Your conduct towards members of your own flock might be explained away, perhaps, but this proves your object if it does not prove your motives."

"Are you not of my own flock?" asked Mr. Filmer, in a tone of reproach. "My son, I am sorry to hear of such a defalcation."

Edgar paused, gazing silently in his face for a moment; and then, with a sudden start, he replied, "I will not have the question turned from the straightforward course. Your object was, I say, to load an innocent man with a false charge, to deprive him of all means of establishing his innocence, and to see him condemned and suffer for that of which you knew him to be guiltless."

He spoke impetuously; but there was a truth, a sincerity, an earnestness in his whole tone and manner, which carried conviction to the hearts of those who heard it; and at a mere glance round, Mr. Filmer gathered enough,

from the faces of the somewhat numerous auditory, to show him that he was condemned by the judgment of all present. But he quailed not; his brow grew stern, his look lofty, and he replied, in a loud, almost imperious tone, "My object was, sir, to save you, and to save that lady from the wiles of the artful and ambitious—that is the great object that I have had in view in every act of mine which concerned that person."

But his reply only still farther roused Edgar's indignation. "Of me, sir," he said, "you shall say what you like; but do not attempt again to mix my dear cousin's name with this business. With her, at least, you have nothing to do, except that, knowing you all along to be what you are, she has tolerated you in her house out of respect for my father; but I think if she had known, and my father had known, how deeply and shamelessly you have injured him, and injured one who is now a saint in heaven, she would never have suffered

you to enter her gates, and he would have spurned you from his door."

"What do you mean?—whom do you mean?" exclaimed Sir Arthur Adelon, starting forward, with a face as pale as ashes, and eyes haggard with intense emotion. "Whom do you mean, my son? Whom do you mean, my Edgar?"

"My mother," answered Edgar Adelon, in a slow and solemn tone; and almost as he spoke the words, Sir Arthur reeled, and fell at his feet.

CHAPTER XII.

THE scene of confusion that ensued after the event related in the last chapter is not to be described. Every one crowded round Sir Arthur Adelon, and he was speedily raised and placed upon the sofa. Servants were called, water was sprinkled in his face, and all the usual restoratives were had recourse to for some time in vain. He opened his eyes faintly, indeed, for a moment, but he seemed instantly to relapse, and a servant was sent off in haste to Barhampton for the surgeon who usually attended him; for the only person who seemed to be sure that it was an ordinary fainting fit,

though one of a very severe kind, was Captain M——, who, with kind and judicious words, encouraged Eda and Edgar to pursue their efforts, assuring them that they would be finally successful.

At the end of half an hour Sir Arthur began to revive; and one or two of the guests, who had made their comfort yield to their politeness, then vacated the room, leaving only Captain M——, with Edgar, Dudley, Eda, and Helen. For some time the baronet seemed incapable of speaking, for though he looked round from time to time with an anxious glance, he remained perfectly silent, notwithstanding more than one inquiry as to how he felt. His first words, however, when he did speak, instantly recalled the subject which had interested them all so deeply the moment before he had fainted.

“Where is the priest?” he said. “Where is Father Peter?” And every one instantly looked round, and then, for the first time, per-

ceived that he was gone. Eda would fain have diverted her uncle's attention from matters which she knew must be most painful to him; but Sir Arthur slowly raised himself upon the sofa, and would have got up entirely had his strength permitted, still repeating, "Where is he?—where is he? Seek him—seek him! Do not let him escape!" Then pressing his hand upon his brow, he added, "Can it be true?—It has been a frightful dream to me for many a long year. Seek him—seek him, somebody!—Oh! if it be true, I will tear his heart out!"

Dudley and Captain M—— hurried away from the room to inquire for the priest, while Eda assured her uncle that she doubted not he would soon be found; but Edgar, looking from the back of the sofa behind which he was standing, shook his head with a stern and mournful expression of face, as if to express a strong doubt that such would be the case.

But little information of Father Filmer's

movements could be obtained by Dudley and his companion from the servants. Some of them had seen him pass out of the breakfast-room, but not aware that any charge whatever had been brought against him, had taken no notice of so ordinary an occurrence. Others had seen him mount the staircase towards his own room, but when he was sought for there he was not found. No one had seen him quit the house, however; and though one or two of those who had lately come up the alley, or through the park, were questioned particularly on the subject, none could give any information, and every room to which it was supposed he might have betaken himself was examined in vain. Finding all their search fruitless, the two gentlemen at length returned to the breakfast-room, and found Sir Arthur half-seated, half-reclining on the sofa, but much more calm than he had been when they left him. He looked hard at Dudley for a moment without speaking, as if endeavouring

to gain command over himself, and then said, in a cold and formal tone, "Pray be seated, sir. You have brought some serious charges against a gentleman who has long lived with me as a friend—ay, for more than five-and-twenty years. Had you concluded all you wished to say?"

"There were other charges, Sir Arthur," replied Dudley, "which in your eyes would be doubtless much more important. Those which I have brought affect myself alone; and though, perhaps, more immediately cognizant by the law, as coming nearly, if not quite, under the statute in regard to the subornation of evidence, is in my mind less criminal than his conduct towards you, whom, for the five-and-twenty years you speak of, he has deceived, betrayed, and injured. But on that subject, Sir Arthur, as I see it affects you much, it will be better to speak at a future period. Those charges which I have actually brought, I am prepared to sustain immediately. Indeed, they

can be proved at once by Mr. Clive, who is in the next room; or even this young lady," he continued, pointing to Helen, "can give you full information.—But all this had better also be referred to another occasion, when you will be more able to give attention to the subject."

"His presence would be necessary," said Sir Arthur, leaning his head upon his hand. "But there is one question more, sir—one question more, and I have done for the present. Was it from you, sir, that my son derived the information which led him to utter the words he lately did?"

"No, assuredly," answered Dudley; "but I can see clearly that his words pointed to the same painful subject, in regard to which I also have charges to make of a most serious character. Where he obtained his information I cannot tell."

"From the same source whence yours was derived, Dudley," replied Edgar. "Only a few

words were spoken; but, connected with some old letters from my poor mother, they were enough to enlighten me as to much of the dark past."

Sir Arthur waved his hand as his son spoke, saying, "I cannot hear it now—I will go to my own room. Come with me, Edgar.—I shall have the honour of seeing you again this evening, sir," he continued, turning to Dudley, who replied, with a slight degree of embarrassment of manner, "Assuredly, Sir Arthur, if you wish it; but if our farther conference is to be this evening, I must, I fear, be an intruder here till that time, for my present abode is near the place where we met shipwreck, twelve miles distant."

Sir Arthur Adelon was faint, agitated, and shaken; but yet a touch of his own self-important pride could not be repressed; and with an air, by no means very well satisfied or altogether courteous, he replied, pointing to Eda,

while he walked towards the door leaning on his son's arm, "That lady is mistress of herself and of this house, and doubtless she will be happy in having your society."

"Oh, my dear uncle!" said Eda, starting forward with a look of pain, "how can you speak such unkind words?"

"Well, well!" replied her uncle, kissing her brow, "I do believe you love me, Eda; but no more just now." And he slowly quitted the room.

As soon as he was gone, Eda turned towards Dudley, with many mingled emotions in her bosom, which, had it not been for the presence of others, would probably have found relief in tears and in his arms. As it was, she gave him her hand, saying, "You stay, of course, Dudley, and, I trust, will remain some days."

"I must stay till this task is accomplished," he replied, and he would fain have added the dear, familiar name which he ever called her in his heart; but the presence of Captain M——

restrained him, and he would not call her Miss Brandon. "I was not aware," he proceeded, "that the information I have to convey would pain your uncle so deeply as the effect of the few words spoken by Edgar make me fear it will, or I would not have undertaken the task. We make sad mistakes in life, I am afraid, in judging of the character of others. We are too apt to suppose that one great predominant passion or weakness swallows up all others; and yet I am convinced, that if we looked into the heart of any man, be he the most ambitious, the most avaricious, the most vain, the most proud, we should find some well of tenderness hidden under the rubbish of life, which, if opened out again, might pour forth fresh and pure waters to revivify and beautify all around."

"Oh that we had many searchers for such wells," said Eda; "but it seems to me that men, in dealing with their fellow-men, rather labour

to cover and hide them. But what can have become of Mr. Filmer? Do you think he has fled?"

"It would seem so," answered Dudley; "and yet I can hardly imagine that one who has gone on for so many years in successful hypocrisy, would yield the field after so brief a struggle."

"I do not know," said Captain M——; "it may be that he finds himself fully detected, and then what a mass of fraud and sin must present itself to memory, and terrify him with the prospect of exposure and punishment. I remarked that he stood firm before all the charges brought against him in regard to his infamous and criminal conduct towards you, Dudley. It seemed as if he thought that, upon some principle, he could justify himself—at least, to himself—for acts the most base; but when Mr. Adelon uttered those few words about his mother, my eye was upon him, and he gave way at once. I saw him shake in every limb,

and should certainly have watched him narrowly, to prevent his escape, had not Sir Arthur occupied all my attention. But now, I think, I will mount my horse, and, riding round for a few miles, endeavour to obtain some information regarding this man's place of retreat. It surely will not be so difficult here to overtake a bushranger as it is in the fifth quarter of the globe, Dudley."

As he spoke, Edgar re-entered the room with a quick step; but it was to Helen he now turned. He had only hitherto, throughout all the scenes which had taken place, spoken a few words to her, and given her one look; but the words and the look were both of love. He now led her at once into the deep window, and conversed eagerly with her, mingling inquiries about matters quite different with expressions of tenderness and affection.

"This bad man must be found, Helen, dearest," he said; "you look pale, love, and anxious. I am the more eager to find him, my

beloved, because he has disgraced the religion which we hold, perverting its pure precepts to suit the dark, foul purposes of his own heart. Even were it not for that, my Helen, I would pursue him throughout life ; for he poisoned the sources of my dear mother's happiness, and has turned the noble nature of my father to a curse. Nay, look not up so imploringly in my face, sweet love, with those dear reproachful eyes, as if you thought your Edgar fierce and stern. It is only that I am eager, Helen—very eager—I have ever been so—eager in love, eager, I trust, in pursuit of justice and right, eager in defence of innocence—and surely I may be eager in the punishment of iniquity and wrong. Helen will not think me very wrong for being so ?”

“Wrong, Edgar !” she answered ; “do you not know I think everything you do right ? I never saw you do anything that was wrong from our infancy till now.”

“Oh yes, many a thing,” answered Edgar ;

and then dropping his voice, he added—"When first I kissed those dear pouting lips, did you not tell me I was very wrong indeed? But, Helen, we must find this man, wherever he may be. I shall not rest in peace till I have made him, with his own lips, undo the wrong he did my mother. You know his haunts well. Tell me, love, where you think it most likely he would betake himself."

"Not to our house, certainly," answered Helen, "now that he knows we are aware of all his baseness to poor Mr. Dudley; and not to the cottage of Connor, unless it be to reproach him for exposing him. I really know not where he will go—surely not to the Priory."

"No, I should think not," answered Edgar, musing. "But here comes your father. This night shall set his heart at ease."

"That will never be," replied Helen, with a very sorrowful look. "The death of that unhappy young man still rests like a heavy weight upon him. You have but to look into his face

to see that it is bearing him down to the earth."

"I trust your happiness, dear Helen, may cheer him," answered her lover; "and to secure that shall be Edgar's task."

Advancing towards Clive as he spoke, he put nearly the same questions to him which he had put to Helen, regarding the probable course which Mr. Filmer had pursued.

"I should have thought he was more likely to turn and stand at bay than to fly," replied Mr. Clive; "but if he has fled, it will be far, depend upon it."

"Then the more reason for seeking for him immediately," exclaimed Edgar. "Come, Captain M——, let you and I set out. If I find him, I will venture to apprehend him without warrant, and risk whatever may be the result."

"There may be some risk, it is true," replied Captain M——, "for it does not seem to me that he has committed any offence clearly cognizable by a magistrate. Indeed, I am afraid

some of the greatest crimes that men can perpetrate have never yet been placed within the grasp of the law. But let us go, I will take my share of the responsibility." And leaving the little party in the breakfast-room, they went out to pursue their search.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE rooms occupied by Sir Arthur Adelon at Brandon House consisted of a large dressing-room, and an old-fashioned chamber on the first floor, lined with dark oak, supporting a richly ornamented stucco ceiling, where cupids and naiads, and a great number of heterogeneous deities, were flirting away all round the cornices, with plaster of Paris fruits and flowers in their hands. A bed, which rivalled the celebrated one of Ware in its dimensions, with old-fashioned chintz curtains, stood at one side of the room, looking small and modest, from the extent of the space about it. Opposite the foot

of the bed was a fire-place, with andirons for burning wood, and on each side of it were two doors, one leading into the dressing-room, and the other into a large commodious closet. The windows of the room were three, and the curtains, which were now drawn close, were of the same thick chintz as those which shrouded the bed. There was thus very little light admitted, although the stuff of which the curtains were composed was sufficiently diaphanous for the eye of any one within to mark the change of light and shadow, as the clouds passed through the air without. The door of the dressing-room was open, and one of the windows, partly thrown up, admitted the air of spring, which, to say the truth, was at the time we speak of somewhat sultry and oppressive.

It was but little after the hour of noon when Edgar Adelon and his companion rode away from the stable-yard at Brandon, and at that time Sir Arthur was seated in a chair before the table, with his head resting on his hand,

and his eyes half shut. Painful emotions seemed to be passing through his mind, for the muscles of his face moved, and every now and then he would draw a deep and heavy sigh. Who shall say what was in his thoughts? Did he ponder over a life spent in vanities which had proved worse than ashes—of time misused in planting the seeds of very, very bitter fruit? Did he take that review of the long past, which every one, who has a mind capable of thinking, must sometimes ponder on in moments of silent, sleepless solitude? Did he consider how great wealth and lofty station, and high health and education, and every gift and every advantage which can decorate the fate of man, may be all rendered impotent of good to himself and others, by the pampering of one evil passion, by a devotion to one vanity or folly? Perhaps he did; but if so, if his eyes were keen enough, and his sight unsealed sufficiently to judge of the past justly, he saw that his weaknesses and his faults had been seized upon by a superior

intellect, to render him, through their means, subservient to the views and purposes of others, whose motives he even yet did not clearly distinguish.

“If he did that, he is a scoundrel indeed,” said Sir Arthur, in a low murmur. “He is a scoundrel,” he added, the next moment; “that is clear; for who but a scoundrel would, for any purpose, suborn evidence against an innocent man?”

But as that thought passed through his mind, a look of anguish came upon his countenance, and perhaps he felt that he had been art and part in the deeds he condemned. He might feel, too, that there were purposes, that there were passions, which, in the more vigorous days of life, would have led him—nay, had led him, to deeds little less base, and courses as tortuous as those which he viewed with horror in another.

But, at the same time, whichever way he turned his eyes in the wide range of the past, that other was still by his side, encouraging

him in all that he now regretted; suggesting the act to his mind, preparing the means to his hand, and, with insidious eloquence, removing the restraints of conscience and of feeling, while they rose up as obstacles to his purpose. He saw that the fiend's own work had been done with him, that his faults and his vices had but been employed to generate more, and to leave his heart in possession of remorse.

The sad and bitter contemplation went on for more than one hour. A servant quietly opened the door, and finding that he was up, and not asleep, told him that the surgeon had arrived from Barhampton; but Sir Arthur waved his hand, and saying that he was busy, desired to be left quite alone. "I have no need of surgeons," he said; and as soon as the servant had retired, fell back into his reverie again. It lasted about half an hour longer, and then, wearied with the conflict of thought, he moved towards his bed, saying, "I will lie down and sleep, if I can. Then I shall be more able to

encounter the task of the evening; for I must and will have it all explained. It is getting very dark—it cannot be dusk yet.” And looking at his watch, he found that it was barely two o’clock. He accordingly laid down in his dressing-gown, and thought for half an hour longer before sleep reached him; but while the busy brain still worked, the ideas shifted and changed place, and became confused. He thought of Eda and of Dudley, and of the insinuations thrown out by the priest; and the vanity which was still at the bottom of his heart again poured forth bitter waters. “Impossible,” he said, to himself; “she cannot, she will not, she must not marry a convict; and yet she can do as she pleases. I have no authority over her; and this man, too, has me in his power, and he knows it. I can see that by his bold demeanour to-day.—But I will not think of all these things—I will sleep. All that must be settled hereafter.—And Edgar, too,—there is another thorn in my side; but I do not

mind that so much, for Clive is of as ancient blood as any in the land, and what though he be poor, that does not take from his descent. I wish it had happened otherwise—and I was foolish to suffer this to go on, but at least it is some satisfaction she is a Catholic. It might have been worse.—It is very warm; I will open another window.” But while he was thinking of rising to do so, his eyelids fell once or twice heavily, and he dropped into a quiet slumber.

While he thus lay, with his hand partly fallen over the side of the bed, the light seemed to decrease in the room, and a large heavy drop or two of rain beat upon the windows, followed by a faint flash, and a distant roar of thunder. It did not wake Sir Arthur Adelon, however; and a minute or two after, the door of the large closet opened slowly and noiselessly, and a figure entered with a still and silent step. It was that of the priest, dressed in his usual dark apparel, and carrying a roll of paper in his hand. For a moment he paused, and

looked around the room, then advanced to the table, and laid down the paper, saying, "It will do as well." But the next instant his eye caught sight of the hand of Sir Arthur Adelon, which, as I have said, had dropped over the side of the bed, and with a bitter smile, Filmer advanced and gazed upon the sleeping face of him who had been once so much his friend. The clear, fair skin of the old man's cheek was still somewhat pale with the emotions of the day, and his brow still bore the trace of care. His mouth, too, moved from time to time, as if the busy thoughts which had been agitating him were yet at work within, prompting words which the chained lip refused to utter. As he gazed, the priest's look became stern and almost fierce; and it would seem that some thoughts or purposes suggested themselves to his mind, which other feelings induced him to reject, for he waved his arm, and spread forth his hand, as if he were throwing something from him, and murmured in a low voice, "No!"

The moment after, there was a vivid flash of lightning, which, notwithstanding the shade of the curtains, glared round the whole room, and made the face of the sleeping man look like that of a corpse. The rattle of the thunder succeeded, shaking the whole house; and Sir Arthur Adelon started and turned, as if to rise up from his bed. The priest instantly laid his hand upon his arm, saying, "My son!"

Sir Arthur gazed at him with a bewildered look, and then a sharp and angry expression came into his face. "Ah! is that you?" he said. "They thought you were gone."

"They mistook," replied the priest. "Lie still, and hear me, for I have much to say. Your incorrigible weakness shows me, that it is vain to remain with you longer. I cannot make you what you ought to be; and now I leave you to yourself."

"What I ought to be!" said Sir Arthur Adelon, raising himself upon his arm. "Have you not made me all I ought not to be?"

“As the most precious medicines become the most hurtful poisons to some peculiar constitutions,” answered the priest, “so the best counsels to some men produce the worst results. Such has it been in your case, for the inherent feebleness of your mind was not capable of bearing the strong food that mine would have given it.”

“This is too insolent!” exclaimed the baronet, raising himself still farther, and stretching his hand towards the bell; but Filmer grasped his arm tight, with a menacing look, saying, “Forbear! and remember, man, what must be the consequence of my staying here. If I go, it is in charity to you; for should I stay, depend upon it, it will be to expose, from the beginning to the end, the acts of a life, the records of which I have put down here, lest your own memory should have been more treacherous than mine. Remember, I say, that everything, from first to last, is within my grasp, and that I can, when I please, open

the casket, and pour out the jewels of proud Sir Arthur Adelon's good deeds, for the admiring eyes of all the world. Remember, that against the code of honour, the laws of the land, and the dictates of religion, you have equally offended, and that if I remain, I remain to explain all."

The baronet evidently quailed before him; and sinking back upon his pillow again, he gazed up in his face for a moment in silence, and then said, "Dark and evil man as you are, speak not of religion or of laws; but if you would do one act of charity before you go, explain to me, rather than to others, the saddest and the gloomiest page of my life's history. Relieve my mind of the heavy doubts and fears that have been upon it for many a long year; notwithstanding all the presumptions that you brought forward—ay, bitter as it may be—tell me, rather, that the wife whom I so dearly loved was really guilty—guilty of anything—rather than leave me to think that my unkindness killed her wrongfully. Speak,

man, speak!—Do not stand there, smiling at me like a fiend, but tell me, was she guilty or not?”

“As innocent as the purest work of God,” replied the priest; and as he spoke, a sharp shudder passed over the whole frame of Sir Arthur Adelon, and his face became distorted with various passions—sorrow, and rage, and remorse. “Villain, villain, villain!” he cried, “then why did you so basely deceive me?”

“What, then, you have not seen Martin Oldkirk?” said Filmer, with a look of some surprise. “He is here, in this house, and will soon tell you all.”

“What! Martin Oldkirk, my old servant?” exclaimed the baronet. “Ah! I see—I see the whole damnable plot. You—you corrupted him.”

“Nay, not so,” answered Filmer, in a still bitter contemptuous tone; “but your own weak jealousy twisted his words from their right meaning, and made that serviceable to

your suspicions which should only have confirmed your trust."

"At your suggestion, fiend!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, fiercely. "I remember it all, as well as if it were but yesterday. Oh! fool that I have been!" And striking his clenched fist upon his forehead, he fell back again upon the bed from which he had once more partially risen.

"And fool that you ever will be," answered Filmer, with a look of contempt. "Had that woman remained with you another year, she would have made you a heretic, as she was herself in heart." But his words fell upon an inattentive ear, for Sir Arthur Adelon had relapsed into the same state in which we have seen him during the morning. The priest gazed on him with a stern and thoughtful brow when he perceived that he had again fainted; but gradually a slight, a very slight smile curled his lip, and he said, speaking his thoughts aloud, "What shall I do? He has fainted again—Pshaw! he will get better of this, as

he has got better of many things. Poor, unhappy man, without firmness to carry forth good or evil! Had he but been firm, half of Yorkshire might have been Catholic at this day—and I, perhaps, a cardinal”—and he added, the next moment, “with power to direct the efforts of the true church, in a course which would insure to her the return of this darkened land to her motherly bosom.”

It was an after-thought, undoubtedly; for it is to be remarked, that in all hierarchies where men are expected to merge personal passions and desires in the objects of a great body or institution, the passions and desires still remain; but by a cunning self-deceit, the individuals persuade themselves that they are made subservient to, or banished to open a space for, the general ends and purposes which the whole have in view. It is very seldom that a man can say, with sincerity and truth, “I desire to be made a bishop or a cardinal, only for the good of religion.”

Mr. Filmer perhaps felt that truth as much as any man; but yet he still persuaded himself that he was right, or at all events, affected to believe it; for the fraudulent juggle that goes on between man and his own heart is almost always more or less successful where strong passions are engaged, and there were many strong passions which shared in the motive of every one of Mr. Filmer's actions. If one had examined closely, the promotion of his church's views would have been found to bear a very small and insignificant share in any of his proceedings; and yet, even to himself, he affected to believe it to be the great, the sole, the overpowering object of his endeavours.

While he stood and gazed upon the face of Sir Arthur Adelon, as he lay like a corpse before him, the low-muttered thunder growled around his head, and the heavy drops of rain began to fall thick and fast, pattering in a deluge upon the windows, and splashing upon the turfylawns. "There is more in the hills," he said, "and I

must make haste, or the rivers will be swollen and stop me. I wonder which way the fools have taken who went in pursuit. The servants must have done dinner. But that matters not; they will not venture, I think, to oppose me, even if any one sees me; and that brutal idiot, Oldkirk, must be gone.—I must even take my chance. Who minds the lightning?”

And yet, such is human nature, the very next flash made him put his hands before his eyes and turn somewhat pale.

“It is awfully vivid,” he said. “This artillery of heaven, men think, is sent to punish the guilty alone—the immediate retribution of the Almighty. If so, why does it choose its aims so lucklessly! I have seen the loveliest and the purest struck by it—the murderer, the villain, and the false prophet pass through it unscathed. But I will go, lest a worse fate than that of the lightning should reach me. Farewell, old man,” he continued, looking at the couch on which Sir Arthur Adelon was lying; “after many

years' sojourn on this earth together, you and I may never meet again. If friendship unvarying, and services not to be doubted, and counsels ever for the best, could have done aught with you, you should have had them—nay, you have had them. But you were too weak and idle to profit even by experience; instead of full trust, you gave half confidence; instead of full obedience, you gave nothing but a questioning support; and the church must triumph wherever it sets its foot, or the day of its destruction is arrived."

With this unvarying maxim of the Roman church, he turned away and left him, placing the papers he had brought farther on the table, with the claws of the inkstand to hold them safely down. He retired by the same means which had given him entrance; and, without the slightest appearance of anxiety or haste, opened the first door and shut it behind him, then pulled back the private door which afforded a communication between his room and that of

the baronet, and ascended a flight of steps which led to the chambers above.

All remained still and quiet below ; and in a few minutes, proceeding into the stable-yard, Mr. Filmer had mounted, without the slightest opposition, a horse which had been set apart for his own use while at Brandon, and was riding away, but in a direction different to that which Edgar and his friend had taken.

CHAPTER XIV.

THEY first paused at the park gates, Edgar Adelon and Captain M——, and asked, in a quiet, easy tone, if Mr. Filmer had lately passed. The answer, as the reader may anticipate, was, “No;” and separating, they rode round the whole extent of the wide space enclosed within the walls of Brandon park—not less than four or five square miles—inquiring of every person whom they met, and at every cottage which they passed, but without receiving any intelligence whatever. After having made this circuit, they rode down to Clive Grange, where Edgar was received with the greatest joy by all

the servants ; but no information was afforded, till one of the maid-servants recollected having heard the ploughman say that he thought he had seen Father Peter walking over the downs towards Barhampton. Edgar, impetuous as usual, was for setting out immediately ; but Captain M—— stopped to investigate the statement, and inquired when this vision was seen. That the maid could not tell, but informed him that the man had mentioned the fact when he came home to dinner, adding, however, that he had returned to his work. Finding that the spot where he was employed lay considerably out of the way, the two gentlemen set off again, taking the cottage of Daniel Connor as they went ; but the door was locked, and nobody within.

At Barhampton their inquiries were equally vain, though every quarter was applied to where it was supposed that anything like information could be obtained ; and after a fruitless search of nearly an hour, they turned

their horses' heads back towards Brandon, conversing on what it might be expedient to do next.

By this time, however, the indications of an approaching storm were visible in the sky. Large clouds, not decked with the fleecy fringes of the soft spring, but hard, defined, and of a bluish black, were rising rapidly in the south; and as Edgar and his friend gazed over the wide scene which presented itself to the eye from the slope just out of the gates of Barhampton, a curious purple light spread over the whole, giving to field, and hill, and tree, those intense hues which are more frequently seen in southern lands.

"Does not that put you in mind of Australia?" asked Captain M——, as they rode on.

"In some degree," replied Edgar; "but we shall have a fierce storm soon, or I am much mistaken. We had better leave the downs on the right, and cross the river by Clive Grange again. It will save us a mile."

The plan he proposed was followed ; but long before they reached the stream, the storm, which was advancing, as if to meet them, broke full upon their heads. The lightning flashed, and the thunder roared ; but they suffered most from the rain, which poured down in torrents, mingled with enormous hailstones. On came the tempest, sweeping over the land, so lately bright and sunny, putting out every gleam of light, and involving all in a dark mist, only marked by the black lines of the descending hail.

The two horsemen urged their horses on at a rapid trot, taking the road past Mead's farm, and along the brow of the hill overhanging the river, to reach the bridge near Mr. Clive's house ; and they remarked, as they rode along, that the waters below, usually so limpid and bright, were now turbid and red, whirling in rapid eddies, near the banks, but rushing on in foam and confusion, in the midst of the course.

“ Why, this is quite a torrent,” said Captain

M——, as they proceeded. “When we passed this morning it was nothing but a clear trout-stream.”

“It is sometimes very furious when there is much rain in the hills,” replied Edgar. “I remember it carrying away a mill some way higher up—miller, miller’s man, and miller’s wife, all went floating down together in their crazy dwelling; and yet, strange to say, no one was drowned.”

“See, there is Mr. Clive and his daughter coming down the opposite slope,” said the young officer.

“Good Heaven! Helen will be drenched in this deluge,” exclaimed Edgar; and he was spurring on his horse to a still faster pace, when an event occurred which for an instant seemed to turn him to stone.

Helen and her father reached the bottom of the slope, and had already advanced about two-thirds of the way across the bridge, round the old piers of which the red torrent was beat-

ing angrily, when suddenly the part just before them gave way, and fell in a large mass into the river. Clive caught his daughter's arm, and was hurrying back; but the next instant the part beneath their feet cracked, leaned over to the side, fell, and with those whom it had supported the moment before, was plunged into the struggling waters.

For an instant, as I have said, the sight of her he loved so enthusiastically, likely to perish before his sight, seemed to turn Edgar Adelon into stone; but it was only for an instant, and springing from his horse with one bound, he was down the bank, and into the midst of the torrent. He caught sight of Helen's dress as she rose again amidst the waters, and struck out strongly towards her, battling successfully with the fierce rage of the current, till it brought her down to where he was. His first grasp missed her, but his second caught her by the arm, and lifting her head above the stream, he struck back for the shore, holding her far from

him, lest, in the terror and agitation of the moment, she should deprive him of the means of saving her ; but Helen, with wonderful presence of mind, did not attempt to touch him. The bed of the river, as it has been before described, was narrow ; and the current had luckily drifted her towards the side of Clive Grange. Thus, a few strong strokes brought Edgar to the bank, which was there not very steep, and without much difficulty he lifted her out, and had the joy of holding her in his arms alive.

During the whole of the last events Edgar had remarked nothing that was passing near him. He saw Helen, and Helen only. He thought of nothing but Helen ; but the moment after she was safe upon the shore, his thoughts turned to her father, and he looked eagerly around. With deep satisfaction, however, he perceived at a little distance Captain M—— helping the old man up the bank ; and he discovered afterwards that his friend had plunged in at

the same moment as himself, but that finding Helen's father was a good swimmer, and was striking for the shore, he kept at a little distance, till he perceived that, when just near the bank, Clive began to sink.

Helen was weak and faint, but she found strength to hurry to her father's arms, as he sat upon the turf, supported by Captain M——; and all her first feelings were joy and satisfaction when she saw that he was still alive. He did not answer her when she spoke, however, but pressed his hand tight upon his side, seeming to breathe with difficulty. The next instant Helen perceived the blood trickling through his fingers, and, clasping her hands together, she exclaimed, "Oh, Edgar! he is hurt—he is very much hurt!"

"A little, a little, dear girl," said Clive, with a great effort. "I shall soon be better; but it might be as well to send up to the Grange for some people to carry me up. I am too weak to walk. Thank God, you are safe, my dear

child. It was that heavy beam struck me as we fell."

Edgar sprang away towards the house, and returned in a very short time with some men carrying a sofa, on which the large, powerful frame of Mr. Clive was speedily laid, and he was conveyed to the Grange, and put to bed. It was then found that there was a deep lacerated wound on the left side of the chest, and an indentation, which seemed to show that several of the ribs had been broken. A man was immediately sent to bring the nearest surgeon; and Edgar was watching anxiously with Helen by the bedside of the injured man, while the lightning still continued to flash through the room and the thunder to roll overhead, when one of the maids put her head into the room, saying, "Oh, Mr. Adelon! here is one of your servants wishes to speak with you."

The woman's face expressed terror and agitation; and Edgar, starting up, demanded what was the matter.

“Why, he says, sir, that Brandon has caught fire with the lightning,” replied the woman, “and they wish you to come up directly.”

Edgar turned a look to Clive, who said at once, as if in reply, “Go, Edgar, go. Take the stone bridge higher up. Yet one word, my dear boy, before you depart.”

Edgar approached close to the bedside and bent down his head. “Perhaps we may never meet again,” said Clive, with a good deal of agitation in his voice. “My Helen, Edgar! What will become of my Helen, if I am taken from her?”

Edgar took his hand and pressed it warmly. “Eda will be a sister to her,” he said, “and I will be her husband—till then, a brother.”

“Go,” said Clive, “go! God’s will be done! I am sure I may trust you, Edgar.”

“On my honour—on my life—by everything I hold dear,” answered Edgar; and with one parting caress to Helen, he hurried away.

Captain M—— was waiting for him below

with the servant, who was beginning to pour forth the tale of the disaster at Brandon, when Edgar cut him short by eagerly demanding, "Where are the horses?"

"They are here in the court," answered Captain M——. "Yours led the way, and mine followed. This is, indeed, a day of disasters; but I do hope that no great injury has been done at Brandon, for this rain must have kept down the fire."

"It was blazing away, sir, like a hundred lime-pits, when I was sent off to seek you," replied the servant, following them to the court-yard.

"Were all safe?" demanded Edgar, eagerly; but the man could give him no satisfactory account of the inmates, merely telling him that the lightning had struck the older part of the building towards the back, and that the flames had instantly spread from room to room with the utmost rapidity and fury.

As the horses had not been unsaddled, no

time was lost ; and, riding up the stream to a stone bridge about half a mile higher on its course, they soon reached the gates of Brandon Park. The lodge was empty, the gates were open ; and dashing between the trees of the avenue, so as to reach the open space whence the house was first visible, Edgar strained his eyes forward to see whether the fire was still going on.

A good deal of smoke was apparent, rising from one part of the building, but no flames were to be perceived, and the servant, riding up to Edgar's side, said, in a glad tone, "They have got it under, sir. It is very different now from what it was when I came away."

His master paused not to listen, however, but spurred on towards the terrace, where a number of people were to be seen moving about confusedly hither and thither, amongst whom, one group might be distinguished bearing out something that looked like a mattress towards the court and stable-yard. Edgar thought of his father ; and that chilly feeling came over his

heart which is said to be sometimes premonitory of approaching sorrow. When he came nearer, he perceived Dudley and Eda following those who had gone on into the court; and he called loudly to them, for they had not remarked his approach. Dudley instantly turned, said a word or two to Eda, and then hurried forward to meet her cousin.

"The fire is extinguished, Edgar," he said, in a grave tone, as they met. "It is only the second floor and part of the first that are destroyed. Come with me, and you shall see."

"Is every one safe?" demanded Edgar, gazing in Dudley's face; and before the other could answer, he added, "My father!—Where is my father?"

His friend did not answer him at once, and he was darting away towards the court-yard, when Dudley laid his hand upon his arm, saying, "Do not go thither now, Edgar. Come apart with me, and I will tell you all."

"I must, I will go at once!" exclaimed

Edgar Adelon, passing him; and with a rapid step he hurried on across the terrace, round the angle of the house, and towards the great gates of the court-yard. On the right was a large building, used as a billiard-room; and under shelter of the ornamental porch, Edgar saw Eda, with her fair face bedewed with tears. She instantly came forward to meet him, saying, "Wait a few moments, Edgar. Do not go in there now, my dear cousin."

But Edgar passed her too, with a sad look, saying, "It must come once, Eda.—Why not now?" When he entered the room, he found five or six men laying a mattress, with some bed-clothes that covered it, upon the billiard-table, and pushing through them, he beheld his father stretched out, cold and stiff, but with no mark of fire or injury whatsoever upon him, and a calm and placid look upon his countenance.

The young man gazed upon his parent's face for several moments, with a look of sad, stern thought, while the servants and labourers

who were present drew back as soon as they perceived who it was that interrupted them in their melancholy task. As he gazed, many memories crowded on him; paternal tenderness and affection—innumerable sweet domestic scenes—words spoken long ago—kindly looks and tones of love; and with that sad feeling which ever takes possession of the bosom, when with any of the near and dear the silver chain is broken, the tears rose up into Edgar Adelon's eyes, and fell upon the dead man's hand.

He wished not to be seen to weep; and turning away without a word, he gave one hand to Eda, and the other to Dudley, who had been standing close behind him, and with them left the chamber of the dead.

CHAPTER XV.

Six or eight hours before, Brandon had been one of the most convenient and comfortable houses in the whole county. Everything about it had displayed that aspect of ancient and undiminished respectability and wealth which, thirty years ago, was the general characteristic of the English gentleman's country seat; and now, when Edgar Adelon, with Eda and Dudley, entered the hall, although the fire had never reached that floor, and had but partially destroyed the floor above, the scene of confusion and disarray left in the mansion scarcely

a trace of its former self. Large quantities of furniture, books, chests of papers, valuable pictures, and objects of art, were piled up, without order or regularity, in the hall and the various rooms around it, and streams of water were flowing over the marble pavement of the vestibule, and soaking the thick carpets of the drawing-room, the library, and the dining-room.

Of all seasons, when the empty-minded and the selfish-hearted—who are inherently bores at all times—are the most oppressive, the season of grief and anxiety is foremost. At other moments, we are obliged to tolerate them, as one of the evils of a high state of refinement. Do not let any one suppose this a paradox ; for there is no doubt of the fact, that as “the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog,” (I do not know that I quote very accurately,) so a refined state of society generates both empty heads and cold hearts. At other times, I say, we bear them as one of the evils of our social state ; but then they become perfectly intolerable. We find,

then, that there are human beings in every outward form and lineament like ourselves, who, nevertheless, are not of our nature, nor, apparently, of our race—we feel, or we fancy, that monkeys might be princes amongst them.

Eda had a great deal to suffer from creatures of this kind during that day. The peer, and the baronet, and the wealthy esquire, had returned from their several occupations in time to witness the conflagration at Brandon; and after having taken care of their horses and their carriages, and all their other effects, they had gathered together to interrupt the servants and country people, by giving assistance. As soon as they saw Eda, however, enter the house with her cousin and Mr. Dudley, they found it courteous to go in and condole with her; and although she bore the infliction with wonderful patience, Edgar did not approach by any means so near to the character of Job.

One or two of his brisk sayings soon scattered the party, and after having, in a very polite

manner, ascertained that the fire was entirely extinguished, the three gentlemen I have mentioned took their leave, got their carriages and horses, and departed.

Dudley made no show of going, for he knew that he should still be a welcome guest; and Captain M—— also remained, though not till he had received a pressing request from Edgar to do so.

“We can put you up somewhere,” he said; “and there are things to be investigated, in which, perhaps, you can help me. Stay with us here in the library, M——, now that those tiresome people are away, and let me inquire how this fire originated in reality, and how my poor father met with his death. I do not understand all this,” he added, solemnly and sternly. “There is no trace of fire upon my father’s person. I have strange suspicions; and before I give way to grief, I must think of justice. I must see the people who first entered his room;” and going to the door, he gave orders to one of the servants in the hall to bring

all those who had been present at the early part of the catastrophe, into the library.

“This is a sad business for us all, dear Eda,” he said, turning towards his cousin, who was seated in the recess of one of the windows, from time to time wiping the tears from her eyes. “Your beautiful place is well nigh destroyed.”

“Would I could repair your loss, Edgar,” replied Eda, “as easily as mine can be repaired.”

“It must be some comfort to you, Edgar,” said Dudley, who had hitherto scarcely spoken a word, “to know that your father did not suffer. It is impossible that any violence could have been offered to him; it is equally impossible that the fire can have reached him or injured him in any way; and I am inclined to think that he was never conscious of its existence, for I was one of the first who entered his room — indeed, there were only two who mounted the stairs before me,—and when I strove to wake him, I found that he was no more—nay, his hand was quite cold. The room, in-

deed, was full of smoke, but the air was not sufficiently loaded to suffocate any one who was not in a fainting fit, or exceedingly debilitated."

"Who was there first?" demanded Edgar.

"The butler and Martin Oldkirk ran up together," replied Dudley; "and I followed as soon as I had seen Eda upon the terrace. For some time we did not at all imagine the house was on fire, although there was a strong smell of burning wood; but at length the smoke came rolling down the stairs, and at the same time, it seems, one of the keepers from the park rushed into the offices, saying that the whole roof was in flames."

"Ah! here come the men!" cried Edgar. "Now, Martin Oldkirk, my good friend, stand forward and tell me what you found, when first you went into my father's room."

"It was the butler, sir, went in first," said Martin Oldkirk. "I was waiting in his pantry, as I had been ordered; and when the alarm of

fire came, he ran on first, saying he must save Sir Arthur, and I followed. There was a good deal of smoke in the room, but no fire ; indeed, it is uninjured even now. We both ran to the bed, and found Sir Arthur lying upon it, but there was no sign of life about him. Mr. Dudley came in the next moment, and the valet a minute after. Sir Arthur was dressed as he is now ; and we took him up and carried him down, first to the dining-hall, and then out to the billiard-room, as you saw."

" You are sure there was nobody in the room when you entered?" asked Edgar Adelon.

" No one, sir," replied Oldkirk ; " but there was a packet of papers, written in a hand which I know well, and so I took it up, and have got it here."

" Give it to me," said Edgar ; and gazing at the first lines he exclaimed, " This is Filmer's handwriting. That man must have been in the house when we went away. This letter is dated to-day, and it was not there when I left my

father. I charge you, my friends, most solemnly, to tell me if any of you have seen him within the last four hours."

"Oh yes! Mr. Edgar," said one of the grooms, coming forward. "He went away about an hour and a-half or two hours ago. I saddled his horse for him."

"I am sure he was in Sir Arthur's room just about luncheon time," said the valet; "for knowing that my master was not well, I went up to see if he wanted anything, and not liking to disturb him, I listened at the door. I heard some people speaking loud, and I can swear that one of the voices was Father Peter's. It was just about the time when the storm began."

Edgar gazed gloomily at the papers in his hand, and Dudley demanded, "Did you hear any of the words, sir, that passed?"

"Why, Sir Arthur seemed very angry," replied the man; "and I heard him cry out—'Villain, villain, villain!' I should have opened

the door, and had my hand upon the lock, but then Sir Arthur went on speaking more quietly, so that I was sure no one was hurting him."

"Let us ascertain at once," said Captain M——, "how the fire really originated; for this affair, it seems to me, will assume a very serious aspect if it cannot be shown that it was caused by the lightning, as we have been led to suppose."

"Oh! Lord bless ye; yes, sir, it was caused by the lightning, sure enough," replied one of the keepers. "Why, as I was standing on Little-green hill, as we call it, just at t'other side of the park, towards the back there, I saw something come down from the sky in a stream, just as I have seen a man pour out a ladleful of lighted pitch, only ten times as fast, and it hit the corner of the roof, and in a minute all the slates flew about like dust, and then there was a blaze just at the same place. So I took to my heels as fast as possible, and

never stopped running till I got into the servants' hall, but by that time the place was all in a blaze."

"That is so far satisfactory," said Captain M——; "and I believe, my dear Adelon," he added, "you will find that the melancholy event, which we must all deplore, has taken place by natural causes. It is probable that the conversation between your father and Mr. Filmer was of an angry and agitating character. Sir Arthur, who was even much shaken in the morning, was ill able to bear fresh anxiety or sorrow. He may have again fainted before or after the priest left him, and the suffocating effect of the smoke may have done the rest. You add to your own grief, which must be poignant enough, by suspicions, for which, at present, I see no cause."

"No cause, my friend!" said Edgar. "If you could look at this paper, which I hold in my hand, but which I dare not show you or any one, you would see at once that there is

cause to suspect that bad man of anything, for there is nothing evil, nothing wicked, which he has not done himself, or prompted others to do, and which he boldly avows here as the means to a great end. That end must, indeed, be accursed, to which such means are necessary. That can never be holy which treads such unholy paths. This paper will give me matter for deep thought,* may make a change in all my views, and may teach me to renounce many opinions instilled into me in youth, if I should find that a religion, which I have hitherto considered pure and holy, naturally requires fraud, ignorance, and wrong, for its support. I say not how I shall act, I know not how I shall act; but I do say, and I do know, that this thing will force upon me a review of all my previous convictions, and I

* The little history of a life here referred to may be given to the public at a future period, as it is neither uninteresting nor uninteresting; but, for various reasons, it must not be printed at present.

trust that God will give me understanding to judge in the end aright."

"Pray God it be so," said Eda Brandon; but she said no more, although she felt, and had ever felt, that a religion which pretended to rest upon revelation, and yet withheld that revelation from the great mass of the people, commenced with an error which has characterized every Pagan idolatry, and opened the way to corruptions the most gross, and abominations the most foul.

Every one else was silent for a moment, and then Edgar moved his hand, saying, "I will keep you no longer, my good friends. Perhaps your testimony may be wanted in a more formal inquiry on a future day. But, in the meantime, remember that this man—this Mr. Filmer, whom we have all been accustomed most mistakenly to reverence—has been proved to be guilty of the most horrible deceits, and is charged with crimes of a very serious character. If, then, any of you should meet with him, hear of him,

or know where he is to be found, it is your duty to give him up to justice, that the accusations against him may be patiently investigated. At present, you had better go and get some refreshment after all your labours ; and I am sure my cousin will reward and thank you for the services you have rendered.”

The strength of mental exertion seemed to have kept him up till the servants and others, who had been summoned to the library, quitted the room ; but when they were gone, he threw himself down in a chair, before the large table where his father had so often sat, and resting his arms upon it, bent down his head till his eyes were hid upon them, and remained thus in silence for several minutes, while Eda, and Dudley, and Captain M——, spoke together earnestly, but in a low voice.

By this time the shades of evening were beginning to come over the sky, and although the rain had ceased, the clouds were heavy and dark. Yet a gleam of yellow light was

seen beneath, towards the west, and Dudley, laying his hand upon Eda's, said, "See, Eda, there is hope in the midst of sorrow—I will go and speak to Edgar. There are many things more painful in the events of the day than even the death of a father whom he loved. He must be roused by new incitements to action; and there is cause, too, for exertion."

Advancing a step or two towards Edgar, he laid his hand upon his shoulder gently, saying, "Do not give way, my friend. Heavy sorrows have befallen you; but there are duties to be performed, efforts to be made, important steps to be considered. Eda cannot well remain here in the state to which this place is reduced. Our friend, Captain M——, tells me that poor Mr. Clive has met with a terrible accident, and it is his opinion that Helen Clive may both have to encounter fresh grief, and be left without protection or comfort."

Edgar started up as if his words had roused a new spirit within him, and Dudley continued

thus:—"Under these circumstances, Eda is inclined to take refuge at the Grange, where there is plenty of room. She would not do so if she did not look upon Helen, and Helen did not look upon her, as a sister."

Edgar started forward, in his impetuous way, towards his fair cousin, and taking her hand, pressed his lips upon it with tears in his eyes. "Thank you, Eda," he said—"thank you for Helen, thank you for myself. I know what leads you to the Grange, and I must go with you."

"We will all go down," said Dudley. "I trust that our evil anticipations may be found premature; but should the worst happen, Helen will need all the comfort that can be given to her. There are many things, however, first to be done here, Edgar; and although I now boldly claim a right to act on Eda's behalf, yet it is but fitting that her nearest and dearest surviving relation should join his voice to mine in all matters. There is another task,

Edgar, which you must entrust to me. Painful as it must be, I think I can promise to perform it according to your own wishes; and in the few cases where a doubt may occur to me, as to how I should act, I will apply to yourself."

Edgar pressed his hand warmly in his own, murmuring, "Dudley, we are brothers;" and Dudley, turning away his head for a moment, answered, "Come, Edgar, we must give directions for restoring some degree of order here, and for setting a watch, to ensure, that if the fire should break out again in any place where it is yet smouldering, it shall be extinguished at once. Then we will all go down to the Grange; and after seeing what is the state of poor Mr. Clive, Captain M—— and myself will leave you and Eda there, and find lodgings for the night somewhere in the neighbourhood."

Much, indeed, remained to be done, and many orders to be given before the party could

set out ; but the mind of Edgar Adelon, in many scenes of trial and difficulty, had gained much strength since first we saw him ; and to a strong mind exertion is relief, even under the load of grief.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE clouds had passed away from the sky, the stars shone out clear and bright, when Edgar Adelon, with his cousin Eda, Edward Dudley, and Helen, stood by the bed-side of Mr. Clive ; but the clouds of sorrow had not yet passed from the minds of any there present,—the star of Hope was hidden, though it might still be in the sky. There was a surgeon sitting by the sick man's side, with his hand upon the pulse, Helen's eyes were fixed eagerly upon the face of the man of healing, but after a moment or two he raised his look to hers, and shook his head gravely.

“It is of no use, my child,” said Clive, in a low and feeble tone. “I am on the eve of the long departure. I feel death gaining upon me fast; life is at an end, and with it manifold cares, sorrows, and apprehensions. I am going, I trust, to a happier place, where none of these things can disturb me, and where your beloved mother has long been awaiting me. This feeling, this hope, would make my going very tranquil, were it not that even now all the tender yearnings of a father’s heart for the welfare of his child are strong upon me as ever, Helen. Oh! who can ever know till they have felt it, what fears, what hopes, what thoughts, and cares for the beloved ones, rush through a father’s heart and brain at every moment of existence, and make his life one long care for them. I ought not to let them disturb me now, in this last solemn scene; but still, Helen, your fate is my anxiety—my only anxiety.”

Helen wept; but Edgar Adelon once more

came forward to the dying man's bed-side, and said, with an earnest, though low-toned voice, "Be not anxious, Mr. Clive; sweep that anxiety away. Helen is mine, as soon as ever she will. I am now, alas! my own master, to do as I think best. I am certain that this is best;" and he took Helen's hand, and kissed it. "But there may be anxieties even beyond that, Mr. Clive," he added. "You may think that though she be the wife of Edgar Adelon, she may yet be an unhappy wife; but here I vow, as solemnly as man can vow anything, that my whole existence shall be devoted to her happiness. If ever any of those things which men say disturb domestic tranquillity—a hasty word, an angry feeling, a discontented thought should occur,—although my deep love now tells me they cannot,—I will think of this moment; I will think of this promise; I will think of the fate of my own dear mother; and I will hasten to atone to Helen with all my heart. You know me, Mr. Clive; you know how I have loved her from

boyhood; and I think you will not doubt that I shall love her to the end."

"I do not doubt you, Edgar," said Mr. Clive, very, very faintly. "I have watched and known you from a boy, as you say, and I know that your enthusiasms, in love or friendship, are not only warm, but enduring. Mine have been so too, but there has been too much vehemence with me. I doubt not your intentions in the least either; but I only doubt that others may interfere to forbid that which you are yourself thoroughly disposed to perform. You say that you are your own master—I know not what you mean."

Edgar shook his head sadly, and replied, "My father has gone where her father is going. We have been children together, and we shall be orphans together. In all things our fate will be united. She is mine; I am hers; and in heart and spirit, in love and truth, in hopes and fears, in joys and sorrows, on this earth and I trust in heaven, we shall be one."

“Amen !” said Mr. Clive, and raising his hand, as if in the act of giving a solemn benediction, his head sunk back on the pillow, and the spirit took its flight.

* * * * *

There were many tears shed at Brandon House and Clive Grange ; and on one day, followed by the same mourners, carried to the same burial ground, that of the old Priory, the representatives of the ancient and noble houses of Adelon and Clive were committed to the earth. They had died in the same faith in which they and their ancestors had lived ; and a Roman-catholic priest, as amiable and excellent as he whom it has been my painful task in these pages to depict was base and evil, solemnized the last rites of their church amongst the mouldering remains of ages past away.

Some months went by, and Eda Brandon and Helen Clive kept their mourning state at

the Grange, while Edgar took up his abode at the lodge of Brandon Park, and, surrounded with books, seemed to forget himself in deep study, except during those hours which he spent with her he loved.

Dudley was absent more than once, and remained absent for several weeks at a time ; but Eda Brandon did not think his passion cooled, and she knew there was no cause to suppose so ; for he was engaged in sweeping the last trace of the convict from his name, and recording the proofs of his innocence in such a manner, that doubt or shame could never visit him. He had property to claim, too, and to receive, which removed all suspicion that he sought wealth rather than love in his marriage with Eda Brandon ; and towards the autumn, about the same period of the year when he had first visited Brandon Park, his fate was united with hers, on the same day that Helen became the wife of Edgar Adelon.

To say that every trace of the events which had so chequered Dudley's early life with dark shadows was swept away, even in the intense joy of his union with her he loved, would be false, for there was a shade rested upon him; but perhaps, although his happiness was of a graver cast than it might have been had unvarying prosperity shone upon his whole career—it was not less deep, less full, less enduring.

Edgar Adelon's joy in his marriage with Helen Clive was brighter and more lively. People somewhat wondered that the benediction of the Romish church was not asked to his union with Helen Clive; but it speedily became rumoured that both had, a few days before, in a quiet and unostentatious manner, renounced the errors in which they had been brought up. Inquiry had produced conviction, and they acted with open minds and clear consciences, knowing that neither persuasion, nor sophistry, nor interest, had been allowed to

have any effect ; but that the simple study of that holy Word, which is closed in so many countries of the earth to those who seek the waters of life, had given them a knowledge of the truth, which none could take from them.

The fate of Mr. Filmer remained a mystery. He was never again seen in England ; but Captain M——, while on his bridal tour through Italy, wrote to his friends at Brandon, that amongst the monks at Camaldoli, he had caught sight of a face which he was convinced was that of Father Peter ; and it is certain that, not long after, with money which came from that country, Daniel Connor set out for Rome, and joined himself to a religious community, of the most severe and penitential rule.

Martin Oldkirk was well provided for by Dudley and Edgar Adelon ; and though he remained a stern and somewhat thoughtful man, and retained a feeling of wrathful grief at the remembrance that words of his, perverted by

the priest, should have been used to destroy the happiness of an innocent and beloved mistress, yet his heart was softened by prosperity and opened to enjoyment.

Norries is still living in Australia. It is supposed he might have obtained a full pardon some time ago, if he had thought fit to apply for it ; but such was not the case ; and, contented where he is, he goes on seeing a new population growing up around him, to whom, from time to time, he communicates his own transcendental notions on political subjects ; but he has gained experience from the past, and whatever he may seek himself, or teach others to aim at, he always inculcates the doctrine, that moral force is the only just means by which a triumph can be obtained over injustice or wrong.

“ The axe, the sword, and the pike,” he says, “ belonged to ages when the physical triumphed over the intellectual. The age of reason and of mental power has begun, and

truth and argument are the weapons with which the bad must be conquered, and the good armed for battle. The thunder of a nation's voice is worth the roar of a thousand cannon; and knowledge, and conscience, and right, are arms which no armies can withstand."

THE END.



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